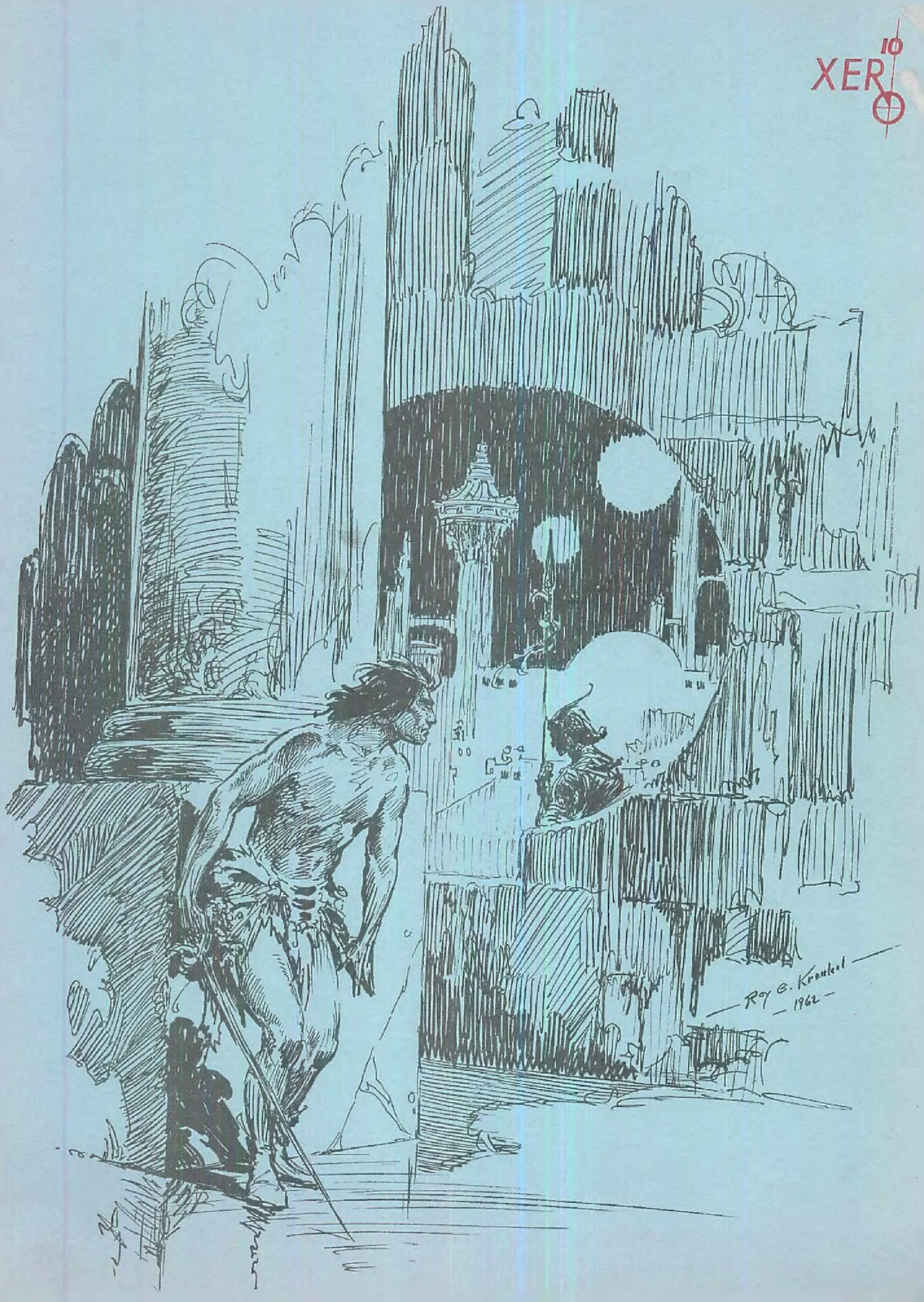

Roy G. Krenkel
1962

Absolute Xero. . . . . Dick 2
Fingerman. . . . . John Berry 4
Sax. . . . . Bob Briney 17
Kiss the Blood off my Dacoits. . . Lin Carter 34
Arthur Thompson*, Dan Adkins,
Eddie Jones, Steve Stiles and
bhob Stewart Explore Outer Space 38
The Very Model . . . . . Lin Carter 48
Two Flashes. . . . . Landon Chesney 49
Sparky Watts and the Big Shots . Richard Kyle 55
Curtain Call . . . . . .Norman Clarke 75
Epistolary Intercourse . . . conducted by Pat 77

Art:

Dan Adkins . . . . . 20, 42 (top)
Bab. 48
Cathy Bell . . . . . .1, 77 (red & green)
Eddie Jones. . . . . 24, 39, 41 (top)
Jim Moriarty . . . . . "AICFAD" adaptations
bhob Stewart 34, 40, 44, 47 (bot), 77 (blue), 100
Steve Stiles 2, 38 (bot), 42 (bot), 43, 45 (top),
46, 47 (top), all "EI" cartoons
Arthur Thomson . . . 38 (top), 41 (bot), 45 (bot)
Frank Wilimczyk. . . . . .hand lettering 17

Cover theme: "Sword and Sorcery"

Sword. . . . . Roy G. Krenkel
Sorcery. . . . . ,Eddie Jones

MAY Xero 10

XERO 10 is edited and published by Pat & Dick Lupoff and bhob Stewart. Ella Parker is Sterling Agent. Entire contents copyright 1963 by Richard Lupoff, 210 E. 73rd Street, New York 21, New York

* Typo by bhob

Well, er, so this is the last issue of Xero. So, er, I guess I ought to write a sort of auto-eulogistic editorial about the good times and the bad times that Pat, bhob and I have had putting out these ten issues, the fun and the work, the accomplishments and the disappointments, the laughter and the arguments and the bone-weary all-night mimeography sessions and the rare sight of Don Wollheim trudging around a collating table for the first time in twenty years. And of course the list of thank-yous, to artists and writers and letterers and most heart-felt of all to the unsung production helpers....

But I don't in the least feel like writing that editorial because it's all about things past, and I find things past of decreasing interest these days. Maybe Xero has been a purgative experience for me; I've worked off most of the fascination that the past formerly held for me, and while some interest remains in such temporal flotsam as 1940-vintage comics and 1930-vintage movie serials, that interest is composed of a combination of scholarly curiosity and a mild Bradburian affection for the things of childhood. For better or for worse, my days as a passionate nostalgic will close with this final issue of Xero.

Speaking of this issue, you'll find in it some unaccustomed items, and you'll not find a few that you might have expected. In the former category is John Berry's "Fingerman", the first serious fiction ever attempted in this magazine. In a letter accompanying the manuscript, John asked me to check the Americanisms in it against actual US linguistic practise, and alter any usage that needed to be changed. I did, and will shoulder whatever blame accrues as a result of my tinkering with another's work. Landon Chesney's "Flash" is not the first comic strip we've ever run, but it's a first attempt at color work; Landom did the original strip, bhob did the color overlays, and George (Bless him!) Scithers did the printing. As of this moment, the strip is not back from George yet, and my fingers are crossed that the registration works, the pages come out in the right sequence, and no other calamity strikes. If there aint no Chesney strip in Xero 10, assume that one did. And as for the artfolio, aside from any artistic merit it contains, there is some further experimentation in rextriping. Duper bugs are invited to examine the result.

As for what's <u>not</u> in this issue, first of all the two customary review columns are omitted. The magazine is being produced in a series of frantic sessions interspersed between regular work, freelance assignments, and various other fannish activities; frankly, I don't know <u>when</u> it will hit the mails (May? July? September?), and since timeliness strikes me as vital to meaningful reviewing, you are referred to <u>Yandro</u> and <u>Spectrum</u>, respectively, for the fanzine reviews of Buck Coulson and the book dittos of Lin Carter.

Any Xero reader old enough to remember issue #9 may recall a mention in this space of two articles scheduled for that issue, and not yet on hand as of stencilling-the-editorial day. One was Roy Thomas's AICFAD stint, "Captain Billy's Whiz Gang", which did arrive on time although barely so, and which, you may be interested to learn, was a 1962 Alley nominee, the Alley being comics fandom's combination Hugo-cum-fan-awards.

The other was Dave Van Arnam's proposed "The Martian Odyssey of Edgar Rice Burroughs" and thereby hangs a tale. The article itself was first projected back in March or April (March or April, 1962) when Dave's grand pal and sometimes guru Lin Carter phoned up one evening and asked if we would be interested in an article about the Martian series of ERB. Yes, we would, pending a good job being done on it. And then and there it was scheduled for Xero 9. March to August would seem like plenty of time to write a fanzine article, but somehow delay followed postponement followed procrastination, and Xero 9 came and went without the article.

Shortly thereafter Dave did complete the project, and it became obvious why it had taken so long: thirty-nine pages of manuscript, containing roughly 15,000 words of researched and indexed scholarship is not lightly knocked off. To go with Dave's article Larry Ivie did a two-color foldout map of Barsoom, plus an accompanying commentary of some 6000 words, and by this time the whole project was too big by far to include in Xero 10. So even more material was added (by Don Wollheim, myself, and more by Dave, and artwork by Roy Krenkel, reproduced as one of the covers on Xero 10), and the whole mess announced @$2 per copy as "The Reader's Guide to Barsoom and Amtor". If you want a copy or more information about the publication, just ask.

Still, Xero 10 is not exactly a handbill. Norm Clarke provides some much-requested additional data concerning "A Yankee Circus on Mars" and related matters. And Richard Kyle is back to wind up the AICFAD series in these pages (in may be continued in Don & Maggie Thompson's COMIC ART) with "Sparky Watts and the Big Shots". Kyle's previous AICFAD appearance, "The Education of Victor Fox", was also an Alley nominee, making a total of two nominations for two AICFAD articles in the year, not a bad percentage.

And speaking of the highly talented Mr. Kyle, I understand that he has sold a few non-fiction pieces to "Fantastic Monsters of the Films" joining other such fannish personalities as Jim Harmon, Ron Haydock, and yhos in association with that august journal.

A final word regarding future plans: those of you out there who have accumulated complete sets of Xero are advised not to take them down to the bindery quite yet.

There will be a Xero Index edition some month soon, and there will be appended to it a final installment of Epistolary Intercourse, so if you feel like tossing an orchid -- or a stinkweed -- at Bob Briney or any other contributor in this issue, or if you are involved in a wrangle back there in the letter section, now is the time to rev up your typer for a final and definitive declaration. We don't wish to pressure anyone concerning these final letters of comment, but if you wish to cement your status as far as receiving the Index, you can do so by sending a letter.

This is not to say that those who don't loc won't receive Indices, but those who do, will, while anyone else more or less takes his chances.

Regarding longer-range plans, it all remains to be seen. Pat and I are rising on the FAPA list to the point where we can now see Jordan, but we don't intend to quit the general-circulation field. Stick around and find out what happens.

But in the meantime, turn the page and, in Landon Chesney's immortal word, "Viola!"

-- dick

fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman

I am a dactyloscopist. That's a fingerprint expert. Did I say I am? Maybe it should be I was. That's being pessimistic, though, and the very last thing I want to be is pessimistic. So, mainly to maintain some sort of stability, or, let's face it, to keep myself sane, I'll tell you all about it. You'll never hear another story like it...not that I'm trying to keep all the praise for myself. In fact, it's my sincere wish that someone else would...would....no, I'm getting off the track, and I don't want all this to be complicated. Really, it's quite simple...the basic facts are, anyway...but judge for yourself.

+ + + + + + +

I was thirty-nine when it happened. I'd been working in the offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Fingerprint Section, for eighteen years. I'd better tell you a little about fingerprints, so you can understand this whole thing. Not just Sunday supplement stuff, but how we actually go about fingerprint work in the Bureau. In a local office, the prints expert has to deal with every aspect of fingerprint work: taking them, classifying them, searching them (to see that the client hasn't been in before under a false name), filing them...filing them both for accessibility and for having a separate system for people likely to be up on a breaking-and-entering for instance, where fingerprints are likely to be left at the scene.

Oh, I know breaking-and-entering is not a federal matter, but we cooperate all the way with state and local police when they ask us, and they usually do. And besides, there's an interstate angle to practically everything nowadays. We can generally come into a case when we're wanted, or when we want to.

But anyway, let's say that a drug store has been broken into, and a latent thumb imprint left on some broken glass. If the imprint is good and clear, with plenty of ridge characteristics, it can be searched in the files in its own group, and if the breaker was ever printed before, we'll know him. But suppose he's never been printed before. There's still a chance. There is a collection of unidentified prints left at the scenes of crimes. So every time a new breaker is printed, we run his prints against the unidentified file. Get it? That's how we catch up with a lot of months-old or even years-old cases. And it's important for you to remember this.

JOHN BERRY

fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman
fingerman

One other thing...the most important of all. The system all over the world works on the premise that no two finger impressions of different people are identical. Every fingerprint of every person in the world, back to the dawn of civilization (and thousands of years into the future, you'll see), is different. Dactyloscopy is an exact science. Suppose that a fingerprint of one person were found to be identical with one of another. It couldn't happen, but take a hypothetical case. If that ever happened, the system would be worthless. It's no use saying that there is a million to one chance or a billion to one chance that two fingerprints could be identical. There's NO chance! Thousands, literally thousands of criminals have been convicted on fingerprint evidence alone. If two identical prints were found it would nullify the conviction in every one of those cases. And what about the clients executed on fingerprint evidence? No pardons there, no new trials. A lot has been said about the permanence of death, but here we must consider its irrevocability.

Fingerprint evidence does not require corroboration. It's infallible...just so long as two people don't have the same ridge characteristics.... Okay?

+ + + + + + +

We specialize in the Bureau. For years, maybe an expert just searches prints. Another one merely files them away...we're getting machines to help with that work now, but there's still no substitute for the man who knows his business... Another man does scene-of-crime work, and nothing else. But we move around, otherwise we'd go nuts. For years I did scene-of-crime. Comparing latent prints at scenes with new breakers, or breakers reconvicted. What I just explained. It happens all over, but a guy will have a run of luck. A breaker will, I mean. He'll do a series of jobs, and leave prints, maybe for a couple of years he'll run, and then one day he'll get caught. Meantime, we've built up a nice file of his prints, left at all those scenes. Like this guy Mulligan. Over seventy breakings, mostly small jobs, leaving dabs all the time. I knew every finger on both his hands as well as I knew the face on my wife. His left forefinger was a dilly...a lateral pocket loop, to be technical. A dilly. And a dactyloscopist can remember a distinctive print for years. Not a lot of ordinary prints, any more than you could remember the face of every stranger you pass on the street. But an ugly face, or a grotesque one, or a beautiful one -- not just commonplace pretty, but a really striking beauty. Now that's for casual contacts. If you made faces your business.... Fingerprints are mine.

Several years after Mulligan was caught, his left fore turned up at a breaking. No search. "That's Mulligan" I said, and it was. Then I was transferred from scene-of-crime to searching. Classifying prints as they were brought in, and looking in the appropriate file. And one day, bingo! Mulligan's lateral pocket loop!

Only one thing wrong. It wasn't a left forefinger, it was a left middle. One other thing, it wasn't Mulligan. It was some guy named Jervis Quincey.

Now I've been wrong before. Not when I've got down to detailed comparison, because as I said, it's an exact science. I've flipping through a pile of prints and said, "Hell, I've got him, it's so-and-so," and then when I've really got the magnifying glass out, I saw I was wrong. We've even got a word for it, a "nearsy."

I mean, hell, it sure looked like Mulligan's lateral pocket loop. I would have put a month's pay one it. Of course, I knew it wasn't Mulligan, but hell, the lake to the right of the right delta, check, and the little dot three ridges to the right again, check....

Knowing that prints are infallible, I should have put it down to experience. "Similar but not identical," that's what we say, it's almost a slogan in the dactyloscopist's trade. But I knew Mulligan's left fore. So I got his prints out. I folded the form underneath the left fore. I folded the form underneath Jervis Quincey's left middle. I held my breath. Christ, they certainly looked identical. I got out my folding magnifying glass, put Mulligan's fore below Quincey's middle and flicked the glass up-and-down over both, and there was absolutely no doubt whatsoever.

They were identical!

\+ + + + + + +

Now I knew that I would be mentioned in every newspaper and every radio newscast and every TV program all over the world. I was the guy who'd found two different people with the same print. I'd be a celebrity. I'd also be out of a job. Probably get a job with some crummy local force, pounding a beat. Worse, thousands of dactyloscopists all over the world would be out of jobs too. How does it feel to wipe out an entire skilled profession?

And crime...crime would get a boost like it had never had before. I had to think....

\+ + + + + + +

Well, the first thing I did was eat lunch. You may have noticed the way small children get cranky and grumpy and intractable when they're hungry. A lot of adults are the same way, although the symptoms may be less external. But I know that I can think a lot more calmly and effectively after a meal than before one. I was still white, and my hands still trembled, but I was in better control than when I first found those prints. Now, part of me wanted to shout it out loud. March into the boss's office and say, "Get Hoover on the phone. I've found a guy named Mulligan who has the same finger as a guy named Quincey. Isn't that interesting?"

But I had to go back and recheck. Of course, there was no doubt. I looked at their other fingers. All completely different. But Mulligan's left fore and Quincey's left middle...whoosh!

And then something else struck me. They were too identical. If that makes any sense. Look, here's what I mean: Even if those two prints had come up identical by some fantastic trick of heredity, on Mulligan's print there was a small crescent shaped scar to the right of the left delta. It was only about three sixteenths of an inch long, and could have been a temporary mark from a paper cut or almost any petty accident. On Quincey's print, the scar was almost healed, but it was there. And it was a scar, not an hereditary mark. We can tell the two apart.

Hell. I threw both prints on the screen. Nearly four feet square, they were. I stood back. The scar seemed more definite, the minutest details were exactly the same, even to extraneous ridges. In case you've never heard of poroscopy, it's a method we use in really tough comparisons, blowing the prints up so large that the individual pores can be counted, identified and compared. One pore was sort of all hunched up, the same pore, the same hunch, on the same ridge. And then another idea hit me. As I've said, those two prints were too identical. Mulligan, I knew, had had that lateral pocket loop for years. It was his. And now Quincey turned up with a left middle print that was the same as Mulligan's. It wasn't just like Mulligan's. It was Mulligan's. Somehow, in some inconceivable way, Mulligan's print had turned up on Quincey's finger! What I wanted to know was, how? And why?

+ + + + + + +

I couldn't sleep that night. Police are damned careful when they take fingerprints, and FBI agents doubly so. Of course, I hadn't really looked up the personal details of the two men involved. There was a slight chance that, say, they had once been booked together on the same job, and some local cop had sort of permed their prints. Oh, jargon again, I'm sorry. I don't know who invented the term, but it's just short for permutated, and all it means is that two prints got switched by accident. It happens once in a while, between two fingers of the same client. It's extremely rare, but it could happen between two clients. It was pretty unlikely; we deal with prints from all over the country. But I would check it out in the morning.

Okay, morning came and I checked. No good. Jervis Quincey was a dentist from Manhattan. He'd got one day in prison on a scofflaw charge, he'd been ignoring a few too many traffic summonses. Francis James Mulligan was a different story. Common punk from Chevy Chase, Maryland. It had been a couple of years since Mulligan had been printed. Quincey had been printed four days previously in New York. The slight chance of permed prints, then was gone. Therefore, an interesting conjecture: If Mulligan featured as Quincey's left middle, who featured as the other nine digits?

Well now I had a task set out for myself. I decided to search every one of those other nine fingers of Quincey's as far as I could. I had my routine work to do as well, I don't like to think it suffered. I searched the breakers' file...no go. Then I had to try and guess. For example, the right thumb on Quincey's form was a twin loop. I don't want to bother you with too many technicalities, but a twin loop (actually it's a whorl, but don't bother with that) has a certain count towards a particular classification. Therefore, I searched the twin loop, as best I could, by guessing the other nine digits. Get it? I was, in effect, trying to find the set that that print belonged to, if it was a real print that Jervis Quincey had somehow got from somebody else's hand, as he had Mulligan's lateral pocket loop! I tried that with all nine digits beside's Mulligan's.

I worked at that, every spare moment, for over a year, until I was nearly blind, but no good. So I back-tracked even further. Bundles of old prints in storage. Really old ones. World War II service record prints, that sort of thing.

I mean, I'd worked hard enough for a break, and fifteen months after my discovery, I identified the right little finger. Albert Charles Hall, age 26, USMC. Age 26 in 1944, that is. Home, New York. New York?

And after all, I proved that the system was still an exact science. But Quincey?

+ + + + + + +

/

Again, it occurred to me that this story was a big one. I figured that it would do me endless good in the Bureau, and that it might lead to something really important. For one thing, it was abundantly clear that Mr. Jervis Quincey was most eager for us not to see his own fingerprints. For another, he had clearly worked out a fantastic method to achieve that goal. I decided that since I'd already done so much hard work, it would be better for me, in the long run, to do a little more before I blew the whistle on this thing. There were several aspects to consider. For one, how had Quincey managed to get the prints from at least three different people (Mulligan, Hall, and...whoever provided the other seven prints) on one form, presumably in one continuous printing, and had it officially signed by a trained policeman who took the prints? And that policeman existed, okay. I'd checked him out, and he could only say that Quincey's printing had seemed a perfectly ordinary one, and he saw nothing odd about the prints. All this by mail.

From one point of view, Quincey had done an amateurish job, because he'd mixed Mulligan's prints, put a left fore as a left middle. The prints on the form weren't awfully well taken, either, but blame that on the cop who took them. But, as big a question as how Quincey had managed his trick, what was the motive to it? What was Quincey up to?

+ + + + + + +

On my next vacation, I drove to New York to see Officer Czetovsky, who'd taken Quincey's prints and signed the form. Eighteen months had passed since the incident; except for my earlier letter he would have forgotten it altogether. As it was, he could recall no conversation with Quincey, nor anything particularly remarkable about Quincey. That was the end of that.

I also called to see Mulligan. He was out on parole, was playing it real careful. I wouldn't go so far as to say that he'd undergone a moral regeneration or anything like that. He'd just seen the inside, and he didn't want to go back. He had a job, honest if not elevated, and he was being pretty quiet. I told him it was unofficial, and he must have thought I was nuts when I expressed a flaming urge to examine his left forefinger. It was the lateral pocket, okay. I even recognized it in reverse. But his answer to my one question, which he probably thought even nuttier than my need to see that finger, suddenly made at least part of the problem very clear indeed.

It took a couple of months more to make inquiries about Quincey. Nothing wrong, as far as I could see. I built up a dossier, even got a copy of his birth certificate: July 7th, 1903, Tampa, Florida. Then I had a stroke of genius which I should have had months before: I got a copy of his driver's license application, and there was his right thumb impression. It was an arch. The right thumb on the full set from New York was a twin loop!

Even after almost two years of this unofficial project, I was as enthusiastic as ever. But I had not imparted the slightest detail of it to anyone. I realize now that I should have done something...put a signed statement in a safe deposit box... something like that. But it's only in movies that that sort of thing happens, and at the time I had visions of marching up to J. Edgar Hoover himself with a complete file on the case -- everything found out and explained. But even my discovery that three or more people had been concerned in permutating a set of fingerprints supposedly belonging to one person, namely Jervis Quincey, would demonstrate my prowess as a dactyloscopist, and would certainly push me for a promotion. I could always say I'd just made the discovery, the day before, by accident. It would look good. But after two years of thinking about Quincey day and night, I must have had a real obsession. I knew that I had to dig and ferret until I could uncover the means and the motive of this man's strange fingerprints. And it was first an important consideration to have a complete set of Quincey's fingerprints ...his very own!

If you want to get somobody's fingerprints without his knowing it, it's actually pretty easy. For someone properly trained, at least. My divorce had come through (I'm trying to keep personal irrelevancies out of this, but I mention the divorce because it meant more free time to devote to my friend Jervis Quincey), and I took a further week's vacation in New York. Sure, I took a risk, but even if I'd been caught, all I had to do was to flash my FBI identification...nobody challenges an FBI man at work. One morning I actually followed Jervis Quincey from his home to the building where his office is located. He parked his car down the street.

I let a couple of hours pass, then I crossed to his car, opened the door on the driver's side (all-purpose car keys, standard Bureau issue) and unscrewed the rear-view mirror. I went to my own car, opened the glove compartment, amd pulled out a small fingerprint kit. I tapped a light film of grey-white powder on the mirror and brushed it as carefully as if I'd been doing a restoration of the Mona Lisa. Sweat dampened my palms at what I saw. I turned the mirror over, and on the light metal backing I used black print powder. Up came the left fore, middle and ring fingers. I turned the mirror back, and saw the left thumb impression. And the mirror slipped from my fingers because of the sweat.

Sure it was hot in New York, and I felt my shirt sticking to me, and sweat damped appreciably under my arms. Then I turned cold, as cold as I've ever been, and I did a spell in the Aleutians. I smoked a cigarette in about three drags. Then I cleaned off the mirror, pulled myself together, crossed to his car, replaced the mirror, drove back to my hotel, lay down fully clothed and called room service for a bottle of whiskey.

Look, as I've said, I've been a fingerprint man for twenty years, and I guess what you'd call a real expert for about fifteen. I've seen everything, from plastic surgery to ordinary burns to self-mutilation with acids. But what I saw on the mirror from Quincey's car grabbed me by the throat, shook me, and left me absolutely limp. To tell the truth, before I powdered that mirror, I didn't know what to expect. I knew that he'd leave prints, I mean, sure as hell he wouldn't wear gloves in mid-August in Manhattan, and anyway, I'd <u>seen</u> him getting into and out of his car, and most of the time he was driving, and I didn't see him in gloves, nor did he delay long enough either time to have put them on to drive and then left them in the glove compartment as he got out of his car.

Sure enough, on the front of the mirror was a left thumb; on the back, three fingers of the left hand...but instead of ridges conforming to various patterns, I saw just masses of dots. And I had to face the inevitable fact: My Mr. Jervis Quincey just didn't <u>have</u> fingerprints.

\+ + + + + + +

After a few weeks I calmed down. My discoveries were mounting. Hundreds of millions of fingerprints have been taken in the last sixty years, and never once has a set of dotted impressions turned up. Sure, there've been queer patterns, but always basically ridged. Fingerprints re-formed after burning or scarring go back to the ridged pattern. Never a mass of dots.

I felt myself becoming taut. Not exactly nervous, but I was smoking sixty cigarettes a day, drinking more than usual, and not sleeping too well. But even now, in retrospect, I'm certain that I did my normal work as efficiently as I'd always done it. But always the nagging question: Why? I thought I was catching onto how, but <u>why</u>?

Inspiration came one night, when I was trying to get one of the office typists to come home with me, contrary to all Bureau regulations. Temporarily I'd managed to forget Quincey, and sure as hell didn't the idea hit me. All I had to do was wait until vacation time came around again.

I've demonstrated how easy it is to get someone's fingerprints without his being aware of it. Likewise with photographs. I had a dinky souvenir from a buddy who used to be in anti-subversive: a little cigarette lighter with a built-in camera, you flick the knob and take a photo and get a light at the same time. Frankly, the idea should have hit me before. Quincey's file said he's moved to New York in 1959, from Detroit. I now hoped that I could make a definite move in the Quincey mystery. Maybe this is all mixed up, but bear with me for a while.

So there I was, in disguise if you please: a black leather jacket, lounging a few yards from the front door of his office building. I didn't even look as he approached. I rasped a hand across the stubble on my chin, pulled the butt from behind my ear, and lit up.

The photograph, when enlarged to three inches square, head and shoulders, was hazy but identifiable. I drove all the way to Detroit, to the neighborhood of his former office, and flashed the photo around. I must have asked two dozen people, including the building staff of his old office, and their reply was unanimous: the picture was most certainly not Jervis Quincey, at least not the Jervis Quincey they had known.

+ + + + + + +

Came the day I knew had to come. There was no way out of it: even at this stage something deep down told me to work up a comprehensive file of my discoveries, making out that they were recent, and hand the whole affair over to the Bureau. But hadn't I worked on it from the beginning, hadn't I made all the discoveries and followed up the clues? Why hand it over for some higher-up to finish and take all the credit for while I got a pat on the head for "bringing it to his attention."

There was still time, I thought, to hand it over <u>after</u> I'd seen Quincey. Not that I intended to make a dramatic confrontation or anything of the sort...just talk to him. This man had been my...call him, my prey...for a matter now of a couple of years. I wanted to meet him, to talk with him, even only once, and even about some perfectly innocuous subject, before I turned the matter over for other heads to worry about. And besides, maybe it was just psychological or maybe it was real, but I was developing a chronic toothache. One of my wisdom teeth. It was killing me.

Perhaps you'll notice that I didn't go see the second fingerprint "donor" I'd uncovered, Albert C. Hall. I'd decided not to bother him for a couple of reasons. One was, I thought I knew how the deal was working. And another, it's one thing to go visit a parolee and flash a badge and ask a couple of damn fool questions; he'll play along, he's in a cooperative mood and not looking for any trouble... But go see a solid-citizen type, war veteran and all that, and ask him a screwy question like, Did you have a filling put in a tooth in 1961?...he'll head for his dentist like a homing pigeon to find out what's happening, and in this case, that would blow everyhhing sky high. No, Albert C. Hall, former US Marine, would receive no call from me. But he was living in New York, and that bit of information was good enough in itself.

Listen, this "next time I was on vacation" business must be getting pretty tedious by now, but that's the way I <u>had</u> to work. I didn't want to ask for extra time off because my boss would have wanted to know what for, and that was the last thing in the world I wanted to tell him just then. So, even though it meant working on thi thing just weekends and spare moments, plus a couple of weeks a year, that's the way I handled the thing. Besides, you remember that typist I mentioned? Well, things were working out even better than I'd hoped. I'll confess that on the domestic front we were in the initial throes of...well, the point is that Mr. Jervis Quincey was not quite uppermost in my mind. But came vacation, I duly made for New York, went to Jervis Quincey's dental office, and found that he'd moved: No forwarding address!

Now, let's be honest about this. You've got to concede one coincidence. Hell, my recognizing Mulligan's left fore on Quincey's form was not coincidence. That was what my training was for. And most certainly identifying Albert Hall's finger on Quincey's form was no coincidence...just sheer hard work, unremitting and thorough to the extreme. I mean, dammit, this all really happened anyway, so you'll have to concede one coincidence. If you can call it that.

There I was. Jervis Quincey was off the hook. Vanished. Now, once again, was this the time for a revelation? You'll gather that that was constantly on my mind. Well it was. Yet the days passed, and it became too late to alert the Bureau. And that blasted wisdom tooth was giving me hell.

Yes, there I was, swilling coffee on a break at work, the typist out of my mind, Quincey out of my mind, just that damnable tooth driving me crazy, and I turn to Robbins from chem analysis and make some remark about toothache, and my aching wisdom tooth.

"Get it pulled," he says casually, "you don't use your wisdoms for anything."

"You know a good dentist?" I ask, poking the thing gingerly with my tongue.

"Try this new one they're raving about," he says. "He did some good work for me last month, and that nurse he has...the last thing I saw before going under was her cleavage...."

"Who is he?" I asked, but I knew before he answered. It couldn't be but it had to be. That one coincidence I told you about. It was like hearing a phonograph record you've heard before:

"Some man named Quincey. His place is at...."

+ + + + + + +

Look, I have to sidetrack again. But this is pertinent. Not, it's more than just pertinent, it's what they call, in the paperbacks, the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Yet it was...well, there was trouble at Canaveral. Everybody's been playing pretty clean in this space-race business, we think, but there've been some unsuccessful shots in the past that should, from all we can figure out, have been successful ones. This time NASA had looked real close at a failed control device, hard enough to find a fingerprint on it that didn't belong to anybody of theirs, so next thing the FBI was in there, checking fingerprints like crazy, and I was on the team doing the checking. I still had my toothache but I was saving that for Quincey, but one of the space bugs at Canaveral saw my obvious discomfort and suggested a quick trip into town to "See the new dentist. Name's Monteroy and he's good. And his receptionist...Florida has a warm climate, but I swear that girl has nothing on under her uniform!"

That was it. I knew! I didn't go see Monteroy. I held out until I could get back home, to my mystery dentist. Quincey's receptionist was probably a final reject as stand-in for Elizabeth Taylor. When she asked my name the corner of her mouth twitched just the least bit, and her eyes softened. I somehow got the impression that it wasn't only my teeth she was interested in.

I told her my name and address. "How about 10:30 on the twenty-seventh," she replied, consulting a calendar. "That's a week from Tuesday."

I winced, deliberately including a hint of agony. "No sooner?" I asked.

"Well, Dr. Quincey is all booked up," she said.

She seemed to breathe in and out slowly. She held her breath in between. I'm no sex maniac, but I swear I nearly vaulted over the desk. "Oh well," I grinned, trying to act casually masterful, "if I get to see you again, I'll wait." I did not really have to act that much.

She sort of wrinkled her eyes, and pressed a switch on the intercom. "Gentleman here, sir, in great pain. Do you think you could see him?"

"Ten minutes," came the voice back through the 'com.

"Yes, sir."

I sat down and picked up a surprisingly recent copy of some slick picture magazine. Frankly, I didn't pay too much attention to the magazine, my eyes kept rising from the pages before me to the receptionist on the other side of the room. And there was my tooth. It really did hurt like the devil. In about fifteen minutes a nurse came through a door from the inner office. If the receptionist was well stacked and tightly packaged, I swear that nurse's uniform was semi-transparent, and there was nothing under except the nurse. "Come with me, sir," she said, and took my hand and led me to the slaughter.

+ + + + + + +

As I write this down, I am not rushing. I am taking my time. I am thinking. I have relived that next half hour many times, and I've finally got it coherent in my own mind. Now you try to relive it with me:

Jervis Quincey was middle aged. He wore...I won't even call them eyeglasses. He wore spectacles, the kind with thick lenses. His hair was grey, parted in the middle, that made him look a little like Senator Keating. His face was just a little too pink, as if he washed it several times a day with the kind of laundry soap they advertise as "gentle to your hands." He had a smile that looked as if it had been sand-blasted onto his face. And he was big.

He waved a hand, fingers most expressive, and I sat in the chair. He pressed a lever with one foot, and the chair slowly, slowly, moved backwards until I seemed to be lying almost horizontal.

His face looked large and bloated as he leaned over me. Slowly, I can't explain it although I've tried many times...slowly, although my mind was ice cold and crystal clear, I felt that I had no control left whatever.

"What is the trouble, sir?" he asked. The sir was hissed, as though he was really eager to hear my reply.

I said, carefully, "This wisdom tooth. It's giving me hell." I said it, I swear I said exactly that. At least, my brain formed that answer. That was the message that my brain sent out to my vocal apparatus, and yet, as if in an echo chamber, I heard my voice, several tones higher than it should have been, almost like a soprano with the slightest suggestion of a sore throat, I heard "One day, a couple of years ago, I was looking at a set of your fingerprints. I'm in the FBI."

Suddenly he was all eyes. There seemed to be several sets of eyes, each bigger than the last. One day when I was a kid I climbed out over a pool on a tree-limb and dropped two pebbles in, side by side, and the ripples spread out and overlapped. It was like that. And there was a stillness. And in his spectacles I could see twin reflections of the nurse staring at us over her shoulder.

"An early lunch, Miss Sylvester" suggested Quincey.

He sounded like a waiter in a Chinese restaurant bucking for a big tip. Sibilant. Anxious to please. And yet, in my state resembling suspended animation...in my private, abstract echo chamber...it was as direct a command as ever I'd heard given. The nurse's reflections grew smaller in Quincey's glasses. There was a sharp click as she closed the door. It sounded sharp to me. And it frightened me, right through my icy calm.

Suddenly Quincey grew small. He seemed to dangle before me like a puppet. He laughed, a laugh such as I'd never heard before. Compared to it, a ghoul's gloat in a graveyard at midnight would have sounded homey. Then all eyes again, my mind still clear but no control. "And?" he asked.

"It throbs constantly. I can't think right, I can't sleep." That was what I meant to say. I thought I could even feel my mouth and tongue forming the words. But that damned echo chamber again. Somehow what came out was "I spotted the left middle finger on your form as a match for a print belonging to a convict named Mulligan."

Now the eyes again. It was like looking straight down - up - I couldn't tell which - into identical whirlpools. All he said was "Go on."

"I searched for over a year before I identified another finger. It belongs to an ex-marine named Albert Hall. He lives in New York."

The door opened and suddenly I was myself again. I just couldn't exactly..."This is a difficult case, Miss Frobisher, I don't wish to be interrupted again." It was like a knife slash...like stepping out of a hut in the Aleutians without any clothes on. And through it all? I wanted to laugh, I just wanted to laugh at that silly name. Nobody is <u>really</u> named Frobisher, it's one of those 1930s-mystery story names.

Then I could talk. "The upper right, Doc, way in back. That's the one." Then the eyes again.

Looking back, I sometimes wonder why I didn't just get up and get out of there fast. I knew I was out of my depth, and for a moment I thought I could do what I really wanted, but instead of the eyes I got a white light, blinding. Maybe that was it. For a crazy moment I couldn't tell what was hallucination and what was real. Had I been blabbing about the fingerprints, or complaining about an aching wisdom tooth? I've thought about it a lot since then, and I'm still not sure which it was. But the eyes were back, they seemed to be part of a head nodding up and down.

"I went to New York and looked up Mulligan. I asked him if he'd had his teeth checked in the past couple of years. He said he had. He said by Dr. Quincey."

"And then you...?"

"Then I started a file on Jervis Quincey. The real Jervis Quincey."

"Mmm...?"

"I got a copy of his driver's licence application, and saw that his right thumb was really an arch."

"Don't stop," said Quincey, moving away so I got that white light again. I couldn't see a thing. I felt as though my head was in a goldfish bowl. Yet I still felt as if might be all right, as if I was just moaning about my tooth, and I wondered why Quincey hadn't done anything about it.

"I followed you to your office one day, and when you were inside I unscrewed your car mirror, and examined it for fingerprints, and saw that you didn't have any patterns at all...just dots...unprecedented..."

"Oh you did, eh..."

And then, once, just for a moment, I knew I really got through. "My God, Doc, will you get this tooth out? It's killing me!"

His face jerked back to its normal size. He put his head on one side. He grinned. I was completely myself again, only I couldn't move. "Open up," he said. He seemed interested. He peered into my mouth, carefully put wadding between my teeth and my cheek on that side, and went to work on the tooth. He did a good job. No pain. In a second he had the tooth out and showed it to me. Then he poured some pink liquid in a cup. You know the kind, a little metal holder with a disposable paper cup in it. He handed it to me, I took it by the edges, poured the liquid out, and breathed on the metal holder where he had gripped it. There was his thumbprint. No ridges, just a formation of dots, as if his thumb had been used as a pin cushion.

Then he said something funny. Just two words. "Homo sapiens." He said it with a sneer yet, somehow, the slight shake of his head suggested that, deep deep down he was impressed.

His head came down again, over me, the eyes again, and the same double feeling of complete self-control and absolute will-lessness. No prompting needed this time. My voice, still high, sounded as though I was speaking through a handkerchief. My mouth was probably swollen, really...and this time I seemed to get some sort of strange, proud kick out of reciting my detective accomplishments: "Then I took your photograph, enlarged it, and checked up on you in Detroit. No one who knew Quincey --is the real Quincey dead?-- recognized your picture. You weren't really Quincey. Actually I never thought you were. A few more interviews after you left New York and here we are."

"That all?" he asked.

"I know about your Cape Canaveral branch."

He seemed to make up his mind then. And once more back out of the echo chamber, to normal. "Gum feel all right there?" he sneered.

He'd certainly done a good job...my tongue found a miniature crater where there'd formerly been a hellish wisdom tooth. But no pain, and, after all, when you go to a dentist, that's top priority, right? Only why didn't I jump up and get the hell out of there? I knew what the score was, yet it was on the tip of my tongue to ask how much his fee would be for the extraction. There seemed to be two "me"s, and I'd always found one, especially with a racing mind, enough to handle. I still thought that maybe he'd given me gas for the tooth, and the whole weird experience, the eyes and the blabbing about my investigations, were just a dream. Looking at Quincey working over his dental tools, cleaning up from the extraction, I was almost convinced. But if it wasn't a dream, if it was all real, why was I getting a rest? Maybe that hypnotism took a lot out of Quincey too. Maybe <u>he</u> was resting.

He turned back to me, bent over, not so close, lifted his hand and snapped his fingers. Standard hypnotist's move. Here we go again. But no eyes. Instead he grew smaller and smaller, even seemed to fade out completely, and I knew that I controlled myself. But at the same time I couldn't move, knew I couldn't even have winked without permission. What now?

"So you've arrived at certain conclusions." He didn't ask me. He told me.

"Uh huh." Funny thing, I felt so casual about it all, this time I nearly sneered.

"What are they?"

"With your dotted fingertips, you couldn't afford to be printed, you'd have become some kind of overnight miracle. So when Ozetovsky, the police fingerprint man, pulled out the slab and the ink and the form, you put him under some sort of hypnotic influence, and took the form from him. Next day you armed yourself with ink and, say a pane of glass but anything hard and smooth would do, and each patient who came in and had anaesthesia, you took one of his fingerprints, or maybe a few. I never did track down the other prints after I'd found Mulligan and Hall. You knew enough to figure that if you permed a set of prints from as many different people as you could, so long as you got the fingers in the right sequence, there was little chance of anyone finding out. You got two fingers reversed but even then you might have got away with it if I hadn't happened to spot that distinctive print of Mulligan's. But back you went the next day to Officer Ozetovsky, another spot of the influence, and when he snapped out of it he completed your form and passed it on as if nothing had happened."

I tried to give a triumphal grin at that point. I think I even made it, but it felt as if my lips were stitched together and I was pulling them apart.

"So here we are." It was a damn stupid thing for Quincey to say, but to me it sounded like a death sentence.

"So here we are" I repeated. Gradually, I felt I was gaining control again. My mind was racing, trying to figure what I could do, what I should do. I could think all right, but I couldn't move.

"How does the gum feel?" he asked, switching crazily back from his master interrogator role to his bedside manor. He even rubbed his hands together solicitously.

Then I told him. I'm not a big four-letter-word man. I hell and damn a little, as you may have noticed, but I'd never before strung them together as I did at that moment, strung end-to-end, non-repeating, without pauses for breath. Some of the words seemed new to Quincey. Reluctantly, it seemed, he looked at me again with that special look, and back to the echo chamber.

An intense shaft of pure excruciation swept through me...it seemed to last forever, and I was in the chair again. I could move my body, I could think clearly. I was in a pool of sweat, and I was trembling. "So what was my reason?" Quincey asked.

I ran my hands over my face. I looked at him again. I was too weak to move. I'm not even sure that there had been a struggle of wills going on, but if there had been, there was no question about it, I'd been beaten. "I guess you've got associates at all the nerve centers of the American space program," I told him. "For reasons of your own you want to know exactly what we've doing and how we're coming along. Everybody goes to the dentist once in a while, and with your gimmick of the sexy and friendly receptionists and nurses, and your real ability to do dentistry painlessly and well, you soon get a flock of patients. Especially..." -- and the thought came to me just as I spoke -- "...especially if you doctor the public water supply to increase tooth decay." That wild shot had hit home. He looked surprised when I suggested it, and then made a tiny, unconscious nod.

He bent over me again, his eyes inches from mine. "Where do you think we come from?" he hissed.

Well that was pretty obvious. I rallied again. At least, I tried. It was like a dream, anyway, and you know that nightmarish feeling that you're falling, and you try to stop yourself, and if you try hard enough you seem temporarily to succeed, then you let go for just an instant and there you go again...it was like that.

I said "That's pretty obvious, isn't it?"

"No," he said. "Where?"

"Russia, of course...where else?"

The laugh was more than demoniacal. It seemed to go up and down the scale several times, and it grew shriller, and his eyes seemed to multiply again.

+ + + + + + +

So that's just about it. I don't think I've missed anything relevant. Christ, I've had long enough to ponder each detail.

It's difficult to be explicit, but I think I've been in this oasis for six years. Small hut, and an old brown woman to cook for me. Did I say old? Too old, if you know what I mean. I've made this paper myself. Good job, eh? Leaves off the trees, got the old woman to chew them, spread the resulting pulp out to dry....

I've written this thing out. True, it's been laborious, but if I have anything these days it's time. Nothing but time. I even made the ink myself. Crushed beetles, or things that look like beetles anyway. Honest.

You see, I'm still hoping that one day someone will come for me. But just in case I've...well, I want a permanent record of the facts, because I honestly bet that no one else knows what's going on.

Like:

The first day I was here, I'll never forget that, I thought it was the Gobi Desert.

But then when the rather orangish sun set, but instead of the moon rising another sun, a bluish one....

I wonder. I wonder.

It was wonderful at first to see a dawn and a sunset at the same time, just by swivelling my head, especially since I have a pretty good eye for color. Such delicate pastel shades.

But still, I wonder just <u>exactly</u> where I am.

— John Berry

Sax Rohmer's literary output consists of fifty-two books, two plays, and several dozen short stories and nonfiction pieces which were never collected in book form. Of the books, only six novels and five short story collections are of notable interest for their fantasy content; the majority of the remaining books, despite occasional fantastic or super-scientific touches, are Oriental thrillers or suspense novels.

In the grab-bag of bibliographical and descriptive comments which follows, the Rohmer opera are grouped into series stories, non-fantasy novels, fantasies, and short story collections. The uncollected short pieces are, for the most part, undeserving of comment. Due notice will be taken both of the high spots, which well repay anyone to investigate, and of the shallows, where only confirmed Rohmer fans need venture.

by bob briney

Rohmer was one of those fortunate not-very-good writers whose story-telling skill transcended the crudities of his writing style. The best of his works exude an atmosphere of excitement, exotic adventure, and mystery that captures and holds the attention, very often in spite of outworn plot devices and cardboard characterizations. As far as literary craftsmanship is concerned, very few of Rohmer's novels are better than competently written; however, many of his short stories are of high quality. In a sense, ordinary literary standards are inappropriate to such an author. If you have the good fortune to be exposed to the books at the right age, or in the right mood, there is an automatic partial suspension of the critical faculties, and the Rohmer fan is born.[1]

Sax Rohmer was born Arthur Sarsfield Ward (or Wade -- the standard authorities differ, as do Rohmer's own pronouncements on the matter) in 1883 of Irish parentage. What little account of his early life exists indicates that he was educated in private schools, and in his twenties travelled a great deal in Egypt and the Near East, studied art for a while in Paris (where his paintings were almost exclusively Oriental in character), tried his hand at composing music, and contributed articles to various newspapers. His first fiction sales were short stories on Egyptian themes, and within a year of his entrance on a literary career he had created the character who was to bring him world-wide fame and several quickly spent fortunes: Dr. Fu Manchu.

"SEEK NOT MY ASHES. I AM THE LORD OF THE FIRES!"

The exploits of Fu Manchu and his would-be Nemesis, Nayland Smith of Scotland Yard, are chronicled in thirteen books which span the whole of Rohmer's forty-seven year literary career. His first book was THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU MANCHU, published just after his thirtieth birthday in 1913; his last was EMPEROR FU MANCHU, which was in press at the time of his death in 1959. In the intervening years the "evil yellow doctor" was featured not only in books but on radio and in a proposed television series[2], and in several motion pictures.

1,2 See editorial footnotes which follow this article for further comments concerning these matters. -rl.

The Fu Manchu saga was originally intended to consist of only three books. These originally appeared as series of related short stories in Collier's Weekly: the ten episodes of the first book in the spring of 1913, those of THE RETURN OF DR. FU MANCHU between November 1914 and December 1915, and the first four episodes of THE HAND OF FU MANCHU between April and November 1916. Each of these twenty-four episodes follows the same basic pattern: Nayland Smith and the narrator, Dr. Petrie (whose first name is never mentioned), are either a) menaced by one of Fu Manchu's exotic death traps, b) captured by the doctor's minions, or c) engaged in trying to foil a murderous attempt on the life of someone who Knows Too Much. In about half the episodes they escape either by luck or by their own efforts; in the rest their escape is effected by the beautiful Karamaneh, one of Fu Manchu's company who has fallen in love with Petrie.

At the end of each of these three books, Fu Manchu is "killed": trapped in a burning house in the first, shot through the head (by Karamaneh) in the second. The third death was at the time intended to be permanent. Fu Manchu had been disowned and sentenced to death by the Si-Fan, the secret organization which he had employed to further his own ends. The Si-Fan was broken up by Scotland Yard, and in an attempt to flee the country by sea Fu Manchu was caught in a storm in the Channel, shipwrecked, and presumably drowned. Petrie married Karamaneh and retired to Egypt, and Nayland Smith set off in pursuit of less colorful and undoubtedly less dangerous foes. And there matters were allowed to rest for fourteen years (years which saw the publication of seventeen other books, and the production of two plays).

With the serializaiion of DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU in 1930, however, it became clear that drowning at sea had been no more fatal to the durable Oriental than had his earlier "deaths". After a lapse of fourteen years, Fu Manchu's daughter Fah Lo Suee sets about reviving and reorganizing the Si-Fan. She causes such deviltry that at last Fu Manchu himself, old and lame, emerges from retirement to join forces with Nayland Smith and bring about Fah Lo Suee's downfall. However, the taste of power stimulates the Doctor's own ambitions, and in THE MASK OF FU MANCHU he is once again scheming for world dominion in the old familiar way. He has also managed to grow younger, thanks to an elixir of life developed in his secret laboratories. These two books are set in the Near East, and are narrated by a young archaeologist named Shan Greville. Dr. Petrie and Inspector Weymouth, from the earlier books, play subsidiary roles.

In FU MANCHU'S BRIDE, the Doctor's activities move to the French Riviera. In THE TRAIL OF FU MANCHU and PRESIDENT FU MANCHU, the scene shifts to the New World. (At the climax of the latter novel, Fu Manchu is swept over Niagara Falls...) In THE DRUMS OF FU MANCHU, we return to England, and then to Venice. And finally, in THE ISLAND OF FU MANCHU, the locale shifts to Haiti, and zombies and voodoo rites are added to the more traditional ingredients of Fu Manchu's arsenal. These five volumes offer the best portions of the entire series. The writing is smoother, the pace faster, and exotic locales and weird inventions more plentiful and more excitingly depicted than in the previous volumes. The fantastic biological laboratory on the Riviera and the cavern-world under Haiti are a far cry from the dingy Chinatown haunts of the earlier books.

Fu Manchu hibernated during the war years, but returned in 1948 in THE SHADOW OF FU MANCHU. Having somewhat mellowed in his old age (of one hundred plus), he is now fighting on the side of the good guys: "My mission is to save the world from the leprosy of Communism." His methods, however, have not changed; he is still served by dacoits and zombies (and nincompoops), and still uses the poison darts (tipped with "B.W. 63, of which I had a little left") with which he tried to kill Nayland Smith at their first meeting in the Burmese jungle thirty-five years previously.

In this and the succeeding books, Rohmer abandoned the first-person narration, and thereby lost much of the reader-involvement which was partly responsible for the air of excitement engendered by the earlier books. As compensation, the writing is livelier, and there are touches of humor. Some of the humor is unintentional, as when Fu Manchu instructs a hypnotized girl, "Tonight you will seduce him with your hair. The rest I shall leave to him...."

Rohmer's last two books, RE-ENTER FU MANCHU and EMPEROR FU MANCHU, were Gold Medal paperbacks, and had British hard-cover editions. RE-ENTER FU MANCHU is a tired treatment of the typical Fu Manchu plot. The action moves (but just barely) from London to Cairo to New York, and the hero stands around doing nothing except complain that he is doing nothing, and staring in stupefaction when practically everyone turns out to be someone else in disguise. EMPEROR FU MANCHU is unlike any other Rohmer book in style and atmosphere. Parts of it read like a clever imitation of previous Fu Manchu stories, but the imitation is not a success. Present-day Communist China is an unsuitable locale for the kind of story-book Oriental menace which was one of the charms of the earlier books. The Cold Men -- Fu Manchu's army of zombies -- inspire no dread, and the doctor himself has become a parody, reduced to the two extreme postures of quiet menace and maniacal rage. It is a poor quietus for such an honorable villain: in the words of Nayland Smith, "an assassin, a torturer, the most dangerous criminal the law has ever known; but always an aristocrat."

"ARE YOU ADMIRING MY JUSTLY CELEBRATED LEGS?"

On any list of "the worst of Sax Rohmer", THE EMPEROR OF AMERICA would come very near the top. It is virtually a parody of the Rohmer style. It was specifically written as a magazine serial (stretching through nine and a half months in Collier's), and the breaks between installments are easily recognizable. Each installment ends with a suitable punch-line ("Unless I am greatly mistaken," Roscoe replied, "M. Pascal is Head Centre!"), and the first few paragraphs of the following chapter are devoted to setting a new scene, reintroducing the leading characters, and summarizing the plot situation. Since this situation changes very little in the course of the book, Rohmer was able to carry over whole paragraphs bodily from one installment to the next.

The forces of law and order are represented by Commander Drake Roscoe of the U.S. Navy (a dead ringer for Nayland Smith) and Dr. Stopford, a ship's doctor on the Cunard Line (fashioned from the same mold as Dr. Petrie, even to the lack of a first name). Opposing them is a set-up known as The Zones, a subversive organization to end all subversive organizations -- Head Centre, one of the controlling officers, turns out to be an ex-Governor of New York and current Presidential candidate, although the mastermind, Great Head Centre, is a mere duchess with delusions of grandeur. The goal of The Zones is the overthrow of the United States government and the establishment of an American Empire. Comparison with Fu Manchu and the Si-Fan is inevitable. However, there is no Oriental touch here: the minions of Great Head Centre ase not Chinamen, dacoits, or members of African secret societies, but Jews, Italians ("reeking of that oily uncleanliness that characterizes certain street in Naples"), Negroes, Germans, etc.

The whole mess is topped off with pure comic-book dialogue. Stopford, dropping final "g's" in every direction, is indistinguishable from Reggie Fortune in every respect except intelligence. And the Americans in the cast can be recognized by the frequency with which they exclaim "Gee!"

THE EMPEROR OF AMERICA was published in 1929. Some twenty years later, in his last series of books, Rohmer resurrected Drake Roscoe (now an American Secret Service agent) to battle against the Order of Our Lady, the inevitable secret organization threatening world peace. This organization was the creation of the Marquise Sumuru, otherwise known as the Madonna, and was dedicated to "purging the world of ugliness, and destroying the rule of brute force." This was to be accomplished by placing women in control of everything -- including men. ("Women were designed by their Creator to be not men's mistresses but their masters.") Sumuru's main weapon in this crusade was sex, and for those important men whose control she could not trust to any of the lesser Sisters of the Order, she reserved the ultimate refinement of this weapon: herself. For some reason never made clear, she includes Roscoe in this select group, so that when, in the concluding pages of SUMURU, he bursts into her hideout, he finds her waiting for him. (She has been whiling away the time with her favorite diversion: skinny-dipping in her penthouse pool with a pet barracuda named Satan.) There is a quick tumble among the mink rugs, and when reinforcements arrive a few moments later, they find the apartment empty.

When next encountered, in THE FIRE GODDESS, Roscoe is known only as Drakos, a faithful but not-too-satisfied member of the Order of Our Lady. The locale this time is Jamaica, where Sumuru has to contend not only with the police and an Inspector from Scotland Yard, but also with a rebellion in her own ranks. One of her disciples, Sister Melisande, has revived old voodoo practices and employed them to usurp Our Lady's authority. In the end, Sumuru deals with the recalcitrant Sister, having her body turned to stone and presented to the people of Jamaica as a gruesome statue. More by accident than design Roscoe manages to betray Sumuru. She is forced to flee Jamaica, and he is released from his bondage.

However, he never learns. In the next book, RETURN OF SUMURU, he invades Our Lady's Egyptian headquarters to rescue the daughter of an American millionaire whom Our Lady has kidnaped. He succeeds in this objective, but in the process he falls in love with Sister Dolores, Sumuru's second-in-command. The book ends as he leaves the rescued girl and her lover, and prepares to rejoin the Order. It seems that his reception is somewhat less than satisfactory, for the final book, SINISTER MADONNA, opens with Roscoe, near death from having been beaten and tortured, babbling in delirium in a hospital room. He recovers, physically at least,

and there is some foofaraw as he foils Sumuru's attempts to obtain the legendary Seal of Solomon. At the end of the book he again departs to rejoin Dolores and the Order. Mercifully, this is the last we hear of either of them, or of Sumuru.

(The first book in the series, NUDE IN MINK, takes place in England, and does not involve Roscoe. The plots of all five books are virtually identical, and they can be read in any order with no loss of continuity....)

"I SPEAK ALL KINDS OF ENGLISH. TELL ME WHICH KIND YOU PREFER."

Neither Nayland Smith nor Drake Roscoe is in any sense a detective. The villainies they encounter are seldom subtle enough to require any detection. Rohmer did, however, create several fictional detectives. In THE SINS OF SÉVERAC BABLON, Rohmer makes reference to "the three great practical investigators of the world." The greatest of them all, M. Victor Lemage of Paris, appears in person in the latter half of the novel, while a second is merely mentioned by name: Mr. Brinsley Monro of Dearborn Street, Chicago. The third member of the famous trio, Mr. Paul Harley of Chancey Lane, was later featured in a series of novels and stories.

The first of Rohmer's detectives to have a book of his own was M. Gaston Max, of the Paris Sûrete. M. Max was a virtual carbon copy of Lemage; it was as if Rohmer regretted the latter's retirement at the end of SÉVERAC BABLON and decided to let him continue his career under another name. Max, like Lemage (and all of Rohmer's other detectives), is a master of disguise and mimicry, and makes heavy use of both skills in his pursuit of criminals. Max's first appearance was in THE YELLOW CLAW (serialized in Lippincott's Magazine in 1915, and published in book form in the same year). The malefactor in this novel is a mysterious "Mr. King," agent of a Sublime Order which is suspiciously like the Si-Fan. The villain of THE GOLDEN SCORPION is revealed at the end to be an agent of Fu Manchu himself, and the latter makes a brief anonymous appearance in the book. These two novels are set in London's Chinatown, and are perfect examples of the "Yellow Peril" school of thriller prevalent in the years before World War I. They are filled to overflowing with opium dens and sinister Chinamen; but it is pleasant to note that there isn't a tong in either of them.

Like Fu Manchu, Max was allowed to slumber during the 1920's. He reappeared in 1930 in THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED. This is the only book in any of Rohmer's connected series in which the fantasy or science-fictional element is dominant. The action takes place in and near the Black Forest in Germany, whither reporter Brian Woodville has been sent to investigate rumors of an outbreak of vampirism: bodies of men and animals drained of blood, and huge bat-like creatures seen flying over the countryside at night. Woodville is warned by a disembodied voice to leave the area. He himself sees one of the flying creatures, watches it land and disappear among the tombs in the local cemetary. He investigates the ruined castle of Felsenweir, and finds its crumbling walls patrolled by seven-foot men in armor... And at this point, the plot comes back (almost) to earth. Gaston Max makes his appearance by the simple expedient of removing the disguise behind which he has been hiding for seventy-five pages, and reveals that the weird goings-on are not supernatural in nature, but are the work of a genuine Mad Scientist, complete with death-ray, Buck Rogers-type flying suits, and plans to conquer and/or destroy the world. Fortunately, this more mundane explanation does nothing to diminish the excitement and suspense of the book. It needs hardly be said that, with Max's help, the Mad Scientist gets blown up, and Woodville gets the girl.

Max then retires for another thirteen years, returning for the last time in SEVEN SINS to track down a Nazi spy ring in wartime London. His investigations this time are complicated by a titled Englishman who dabbles in the occult, and by an

impossibly all-American-boyish Air Force lieutenant ("Put up your hands, because I am going to thrash you until I am tired."), but with the help of half a dozen well-chosen disguises, he emerges victorious.

The tongs which are lacking in the Chinatown episodes of the Fu Manchu and Gaston Max books are present in full force in the stories of Daniel "Red" Kerry, Chief Inspector (later Superintendent) in the C.I.D. The two short stories, "The Daughter of Huang Chow" and "Kerry's Kid," are set in London's Limehouse, and are filled to overflowing with opium dens, tong wars, dope smuggling, and white slavery. Rohmer may not have invented the notion of the "wily Chinee", but these books epitomize the idea. The sinister, fog-shrouded Limehouse of which he writes may never have existed, but it takes on vivid life in the pages of these books.

Paul Harley was a closer approximation to the traditional fictional detective. He first appeared in three short stories (Collier's, 1920) which were part of a connected sequence later included in the collection TALES OF CHINATOWN. His best known cases are recounted in the novels BAT WING and FIRE-TONGUE. The former is a straightforward and fairly good murder mystery. Sandwiched in the middle of it is an episode with strong fantasy elements, centering around Haitian voodoo. As John Dickson Carr was later to do in such books as HE WHO WHISPERS, Rohmer threw this fantasy episode in as a red herring, and the mystery turns out to have an entirely mundane solution. In FIRE-TONGUE Harley is involved with a sect of Indian fire-worhippers on the loose in England. This book, too, has a brief fantasy episode interpolated into it. Of the remaining two Harley stories, one is a short novel, "The Black Mandarin" (Collier's, 1922; included in TALES OF EAST AND WEST), set in the same Chinatown locale as the first three short stories; the other is a straightforward crime story, "At the Palace da Nostra" (Collier's, 1930).

Predictably enough, Rohmer also turned his hand to the creation of a psychic detective. The result was one of his most satisfying books, THE DREAM DETECTIVE, published in England in 1920 and in the United States five years later. It consists of ten episodes (four of them from All-Story in 1915) in which Moris Klaw uses his method of "psychic photography" to investigate cases of haunting, possession, and other occult phenomena, as well as a couple of mundane murders. Klaw is one of Rohmer's most interesting characters: tall and stoop-shouldered, "a very old man who carries his many years lightly, or a younger man prematurely aged; none can say which." He poses as an antiquarian, and keeps a musty curio shop, cluttered with broken statuary and old books, and inhabited by canaries and white rats, a pet owl, and a parrot whose only words seem to be, "Moris Klaw! Moris Klaw! The Devil's come for you!" Klaw's actual identity and true personality are things on which no two of his acquaintances agree, for he, like Rohmer's other detectives, is adept at assuming many roles. Although his cases are less well known than those of such confrères as John Silence, Carnacki the Ghost-Finder, and Jules de Grandin, they are no less fascinating. Two of the cases, "The Chord in G" and "The Haunting of Grange", are especially fine crime stories, and "The Veil of Isis" is an eerily effective fantasy.

The last of Rohmer's family of detectives is Major Mohammed Ibrahim Brian Barûk, an Anglo-Egyptian. The ten short stories about Baruk, collected in 1944 under the title BIMBASHI BARUK OF EGYPT, are equally divided between detective stories with an English setting and stories of espionage and international intrigue in the Near East. Of either type, they are smoothly written, mildly entertaining, and completely forgettable.

"WATCH FOR THE DEVIL AT YOUR ELBOW..."

Sax Rohmer's first novel, THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON, was a peculiar book, heavy-handed and crudely written. It was his second published book, following by less

than a year the first of the Fu Manchu volumes. Although never published in this country, it remained in print in England until the mid-thirties.

Severac Bablon was a descendent of the Royal House of Israel, the pure line of descent having been preserved in secret since the breakup of the Kingdom after the time of Solomon, and could command the allegiance of the world's eight million Jews. (This was 1914.) He was, in appearance, young, dark, and handsome, and was given to smoking opium cigarettes, which he carefully left burning in ashtrays as "calling cards". He was filled with noble ideals -- or at any rate, one noble ideal -- but aside from this he appears now to have been cut from the same pattern as Fu Manchu, Yu'an Hee See, "Mr. King", and Rohmer's other Oriental villains. He was possessed of enormous wealth and secret influence, was attended by deferential Arab servitors, and had hordes of silent henchmen who climbed up the sides of buildings and used an eerie minor-key whistle as their signal. He was also, to judge by his actions, slightly simple-minded.

Bablon is probably best described as a sort of Jewish Robin Hood. His victims were always Jews, and in fact always rich miserly Jews. He sometimes robbed them outright, but more often, by threats, trickery, or blackmail, forced them to donate vast sums to charities and "worthy projects." As he at one point stated his purpose to one of his victims:

> "You are found guilty, Israel Hagar, of dragging through the mire of greed a name once honored among nations. It is such as you that have earned for the Jewish people a repute it ill deserves. You have succeeded in staining /the Jewish name/. I have a mission. It is to erase that stain."

One of Bablon's worthy projects was the building of an airfleet for Britain. Another involved alleviating the suffering of the poor and unemployed by going out into slum districts of London and throwing handfuls of gold coins into the crowds (thereby starting riots in which several people were injured...). But perhaps his greatest achievement was the prevention of the First World War: by frightening and blackmailing the financiers involved (all Jewish), he prevented a loan to Germany with which that country had intended to wage war on Britain. "For this will be forgotten all my errors, forgiven all my sins!"

Apparently Bablon's followers were looking the wrong way at Sarajevo on June 28th... The following newspaper clipping (ca. 1936) provides an ironic footnote to the book:

SAX ROHMER TELLS GERMANY HE'S IRISH, NOT JEW

> London, Feb. 13 -- The banning of Sax Rohmer's books in Germany, supposedly on the ground that Rohmer is a Jew, will be protested by the writer, who turns out to be a good Irishman. His full name is Arthur Sarsfield Ward and he has full-blooded Irish parents on both sides.
>
> Before sailing at Southampton today for New York, he said: "The only explanation I and my agents can think of for the Germans banning my books is that they think I am a Jew, and that, of course, is ridiculous. Naturally, I am protesting against the banning and have asked the authorities, through my agents, to explain."

---

* The exact date of the clipping, as well as the newspaper(s) in which it appeared, are unknown. The clipping was pasted on the flyleaf of a cheap reprint edition of BATWING which I bought several years ago in Boston.

A few short years later Rohmer's books proudly carried on the copyright page the notice that his books had been banned by the Gestapo in 1936....

Unlike many of Rohmer's other books, THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON retains mostly curiosity value. Had it been written entirely in the style of a thriller, in which vein Rohmer from the first showed considerable facility, it would have fared better. Instead, the book continually attempted to treat in a serious manner an essentially ludicrous theme. This, together with a pervasive infelicity of style ("Zoe Oppner entered the room, regally carrying her small head...") combined to produce an almost total debacle.

THE ORCHARD OF TEARS was an entirely different type of book. It is the closest that Rohmer ever came to writing a "serious" novel. It is a near-fantasy, but is written in a quiet and restrained style. All the occult forces and Unseen Powers are kept in the background. Occasionally this makes for dull reading, but the overall impression is still very good.

The protagonist is Paul Mario, a successful poet and playwright who, after years of meditation and study of ancient manuscripts, has built up certain Egyptian and other pre-Christian teachings into a religio-philosophical system for the modern world. This system includes everything from the Hermetic concept of God and Creation to a belief in reincarnation. Mario is doubtful about publishing his philosophy, but is urged to do so by an influential neighbor, financier Jules Thessaly. The publication of "The Gates", the first section of his book, has widespread consequences not only in literary and political circles throughout the world, but also on the population at large. (We are only told about these consequences at second hand; they are never described in detail.) These consequences cause Mario to doubt the wisdom of publishing further sections of his book. He comes to realize that "he has given life to something which has lain dormant, occult, for untold ages, that he has created a thing which already has outgrown his control." Also, he begins to suspect that Thessaly may have urged publication of the book precisely for the purpose of unleashing this unspecified occult force.

There is a wandering sub-plot concerning a young artist named Flamby Duveen, Mario's protege. As the book progresses, her life and Mario's become more and more intertwined, and the situation builds up to a tragic ending (the only one in any of Rohmer's novels).

The book is full of unrelieved anti-German sentiment, which is only natural, considering that it was published in 1918, less than three weeks before the Armistice. Aside from this, the overall impression given by the book is that of restraint. Never again did Rohmer exercise such discipline over his imagination.

Neither SEVERAC BABLON nor ORCHARD OF TEARS ever appeared in an American edition.

With the publication of THE QUEST OF THE SACRED SLIPPER a year later, Rohmer's imagination was on the loose again. This one is about the Hashishin, the ancient Order of Assassins, who are sent to England to punish, in bloody fashion, the thef-

from Mecca of a slipper believed to have been worn by Mohammed. The story of the attempts to regain the sacred slipper makes a suspenseful Oriental thriller, but there are no plot elements which entitle it to be classed as a fantasy.

MOON OF MADNESS is the only novel by Rohmer without a single fantastic or Oriental/Egyptian touch. (Even the suspense novel HANGOVER HOUSE has an Egyptian seer wandering around in it.) It is a love story, in Rohmer's most inane style, combined with a tale of Communist agents (vintage 1927) plotting evil doings in Madeira and London. It has sinister South Americans, compromising letters, a couple of cryptograms, coincidences galore, and a cast consisting of inert clods..

SHE WHO SLEEPS offers a distinct contrast. It revolves around a perfect fantasy situation: in an ancient Egyptian manuscript is found the record of a young captive princess in the court of Seti I, who was placed in a state of suspended animation and entombed, to awake in a later age as a living advertisement of the greatness of Seti and his kingdom. The manuscript not only gives the location of the princess's tomb, and the recipe for awaking her from her age-long sleep, but also contains codicils added at intervals during a three-hundred-year period following the entombment, recording several trial awakenings. Guided by this manuscript, millionaire Egyptologist John Cumberland sets out to uncover the tomb of Zalithea, "She Who Sleeps But Who Will Awaken." The tomb is discovered and opened, the ancient reawakening ritual is performed, and Zalithea awakens...

Unfortunately, SHE WHO SLEEPS is not a fantasy. Zalithea and her tomb turn out to be part of an elaborate hoax, and the book which opened on a note of supernatural mystery and continued in an unreal atmosphere of a fantasy ends on a thoroughly mundane level. However, this does not detract in the least from the effectiveness of the middle portion, which describes the excavation of the tomb and the awakening of Zalithea. This entire episode is brought to life in vivid and meticulous detail, pleasantly leavened with humor. There is, for example, the problem of how to obtain a passport for a girl whose legal guardians have been dead for three thousand years...

Despite the let-down at the end, this remains one of Rohmer's best books. The annoying elements of his style are at a minimum, and the virtues at a maximum.

Although YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS opens in the midst of fog-shrouded Limehouse, the action quickly shifts to warmer climes: via Paris and Marseilles to Port Said, and finally to a small island in the Red Sea, off the coast of Yemen. It is to this island that the Marquis Yu'an Hee See has summoned his criminal employees from all over Europe and the Orient, for some unspecified large-scale operation, and it is to this island that several of these employees have been traced by Scotland Yard inspector Dawson Haig. His suspicions having first been aroused by the Marquis' activities in fencing stolen goods in London, Haig soon learns that much more is involved: narcotics smuggling, and both black and white slave traffic. But even these are only sidelines, and the real purpose behind the gathering in the Red Sea remains a secret until too late.

Yu'an Hee See is known to his employees as "Mr. King," the same alias used by the never-identified mastermind in THE YELLOW CLAW; however, there is no overt connection between the two books. Rohmer may have been trying to start a second series to rival the Fu Manchu books: Yu'an is referred to as "perhaps the most evil man in the civilized world." He is certainly a far more vicious and unpleasant creation than Fu Manchu. However, even though he escapes unscathed at the end of the book, he never reappears in any further stories.

The book is graced by possibly the most annoying heroine in the Rohmer opera. She has been provided with such idiotic dialogue that the moment she opens her mouth, one becomes impatient for the villains to come along and shut her up. Sooner or later, they always do so.

There are similarities in locale and plot situations between YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS and the novel WHITE VELVET. In the latter novel, Rohmer for the first and last time created characters who were not exotic stereotypes or mere bundles of eccentricities. The first half of the book centers around The Kofmanns, a vaudeville troupe performing at the Folies Egyptiennes in Port Said: Pa Kofmann, the domineering and slow-witted head of the family, who cannot understand why the customers would rather ogle the girls in the chorus than watch him left weights; Ma Kofmann, colorless, quiet, and hardworking, who alone of the Kofmann family does not hate or despise Pa, "Little Miss" Sally, their granddaughter, an accomplished acrobat, dancer, and mimic at the age of seven; and the star attraction, Musette (nee Elizabeth Morton), a husky-voiced singer whom Pa hired when she was stranded and out of work, and who is kept busy dodging his heavy-handed attentions. These, and the other members of the family, are brought vividly and interestingly to life.

But, as if unsure of his ability to carry them through a more prosaic plot, Rohmer set them down in the midst of a melodramatic tangle of narcotics smugglers and Secret Service agents, kidnaping and murder. Musette falls in love with Lawrence Tabrer, who is on the trail of the kingpin of a drug syndicate. The latter is known only as "Snow Rat". Through the machinations of one of the syndicate members, Tabrer is persuaded that Musette is a member of the gang and has tried to have him killed; at the same time, Musette is tricked into believing that Tabrer has deserted her. She leaves the Kofmanns and goes off to Istanbul. The last half of the book chronicles her adventures there, where she plays a part in the eventual break-up of the syndicate. The revelation of the true identity of "Snow Rat" is no surprise to any mildly attentive reader, but it imparts an enjoyably ironic tone to the concluding scenes of the book. The book contains no hint of fantasy. The Near Eastern atmosphere is evoked with uncommon skill and economy, and the book contains much of Rohmer's best writing.

The last Rohmer novel to be serialized in Collier's, and the last of Rohmer's books to appear in hard covers in the United States, was HANGOVER HOUSE. It is a fair detective novel in the classic English tradition: an assorted cast of characters assembles in a fog-bound country house, and very quickly one of their number turns up in a pool of blood, with a silver dagger sticking in him. Enter Scotland Yard, and the deduction is on. Apparently out of a sense of obligation to his readers, Rohmer included in the cast a mysterious Egyptian, who pops up occasionally to quote bad proverbs and give advice. He is quite properly ignored by everybody. A startling moment is provided halfway through the book, when the corpse suddenly decides to get up and walk around (promptly to collapse of a heart attack...), but even this is explained away in a relatively mundane manner at the denouement.

THE MOON IS RED was the last of Rohmer's non-series novels. It appeared only in England (in 1954), and the American publishers who have so far ignored it have missed a bet. It is certainly the best of Rohmer's last dozen books. The locale is the east coast of Florida, and the framework is that of a detective novel. Simultaneously with the escape from the Ringbarn circus[3] of an intractable male gorilla, there occurs the first of a series of brutal murders. The escaped gorilla is the natural suspect, until it is learned that two similar murders had occurred months earlier in Paris and London. The first of these victims was the estranged

3 See editor's footnote following this article. -rl.

wife of a Parisian acrobat named Gene Marat; Marat was in London at the time of the second killing, and is now in Florida. All the victims were young, beautiful, red-haired women; all had been strangled, and then stripped and savagely beaten; all had been found in rooms locked from the inside, and having windows accessible only to some abnormally acrobatic creature. About the bodies were strewn shreds of paper and clothing, torn by strong teeth. And the killings had all occurred on nights when the moon was full...

At this point, the reader crosses his fingers and begins hoping that the ending will not be a disappointment. It isn't. Several wild hints in the early part of the book, which seem at the time to be red herrings, turn out to be all too pertinent; and the ending fully lives up to expectations.

"...AT THIS MOMENT I AM AMONG THE DEAD."

Almost all of Rohmer's novels first appeared as magazine serials, and it was only toward the end of his career that he ceased to tailor the stories deliberately for this medium. All the early novels were written in convenient installment-sized chunks, and since Rohmer did no rewriting for the book versions, these novels are noticeably episodic. It is usually possible to reconstruct the original serial installments from the book versions.

This is certainly the case with Rohmer's first fantasy, BROOD OF THE WITCH QUEEN. The latter two-thirds of the novel appeared serially in Munsey's Magazine in 1923, and the U.S. hardcover edition appeared in 1924. However, the novel dates from much earlier in Rohmer's career. The first magazine serialization was in 1914, even before the appearance of the second Fu Manchu serial. The story falls readily into nine episodes, each centered around one particular bit of ancient Egyptian sorcery at work in the modern world. The third of these episodes is virtually unconnected with the remainder of the book, and constitutes in its own right an excellent short tale of vampirism. In the rest of the episodes, Antony Ferrara, a young man of mysterious antecedents, employs the ancient witchcraft to murder his adoptive father, the Egyptologist Sir Michael Ferrara, and attempts to gain control of Sir Michael's estate. He is opposed by Sir Michael's life-long friend Dr. Bruce Cairn, and the latter's son. Dr. Cairn and his son and the only people who know of Ferrara's sorcerous activities, and even though they have personally witnessed experiments in anthropomancy and even less pleasant arts, they have no legal proof with which to confront Ferrara. It is ultimately left to Dr. Cairn to use his own knowledge of arcane matters to defeat the fire elemental which Ferrara sends against him, and to bring about Ferrara's destruction.

BROOD OF THE WITCH QUEEN is Rohmer's most fantastic book, probably the best known outside of the Fu Manchu series, and at the same time one of the rarest. It is definitely one of his best.

Rohmer's second fantasy was THE GREEN EYES OF BAST. This was his contribution to the literature of the were-animal. It begins as newspaperman Jack Addison finds himself followed to his home one evening by a shadowy figure, and watched through the window by a pair of enormous glittering cat-like eyes. When the grounds are examined the next morning, the only signs of the nocturnal visitor are several deep imprints of a woman's high-heeled shoes. This is Addison's introduction to Nahema, the cat-woman. She is not a were-cat in the conventional sense, but a teratological sport whose feline tendencies and attributes become dominant during the Sothic month of Phanoi, sacred to the Egyptian cat-headed goddess, Bast. Nahema is engaged in terrorizing (and decimating) the Coverly family, for whom she has conceived a deep hatred. Her guardian, a mad scientist type named

Dr. Damar Greefe, is forced to aid her in her program. He is finally done in when Nahema goes wild and escapes his control, but not before he manages to deliver a three-chapter dying confession to Addison, which reveals the secret of Nahema's birth and the reason for her animosity toward the Coverlys. He also reveals that she is dying of tuberculosis, and will shortly cease to be a menace to anyone.

Most of the fantasy elements are almost rationalized out of existence, but not quite. The concluding chapters are a distinct let-down after the thrilling events which led up to them.

The similarities between GREY FACE and the Barré Lyndon play THE MAN IN HALF MOON STREET are so striking that the Rohmer novel might well have served as a source for the play. The central figure in both works is a man who has succeeded in renewing his youth and prolonging his life far beyond the normal span by using certain glandular secretions taken from young, healthy (and usually unwilling) donors. Lyndon developed about this central figure an absorbing and suspenseful melodrama, with no further frills to the plot.*

For Rohmer, however, a mere elixir of life was not nearly enough to make a book. His Professor Hadrian von Gühl (lovely name!) must also be an Adept, the possessor of an apparatus enabling him to control men's minds at a distance, and of a "temporal eavesdropper" which enables him to hear and reproduce any conversation or sound out of the past. Von Guhl is also a successful alchemist, a criminal matermind, and -- last but not least -- a mad genius bent on conquering the world.

In the hands of a more disciplined or a more restrained writer, this accumulation of improbabilities could have been turned into a memorable and effective book. As it stands, however, GREY FACE is confused, disjointed, full of loose ends -- and completely fascinating to read.

In THE BAT FLIES LOW the fantasy element concerns the secret of producing cheap power and light, a secret recorded in the legendary Egyptian Book of Thoth, and guarded through the ages by an ancient Order having its headquarters at the Temple of Light, hidden in the deserts of Upper Egypt. The manuscript containing the secret is stolen from the Temple, and sold to Lincoln-Hayes, president of a large utilities company in the United States. The First Prophet of the Temple traces the manuscript to New York and manages to steal it back before it has been fully translated. The document shuttles back and forth between New York and Egypt, changing hands a few more times, and the process it describes is finally put into practice. And "In the darkest hours of a very dark night, there appeared an unnatural dawn. Ships two to three hundred miles out at sea experienced broad daylight for periods varying from three to five minutes. Seismic instruments all over the world registered an earthquake in the West. Towering buildings in New York rocked on their foundations...."

The book is marred by Rohmer's too frequent tendency to substitute a mere cataloguing of eccentricities for characterization. It has the further drawback of being both slow-moving and dull. However, it was liked well enough to be reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries, where it performed the positive service of inspiring a beautiful Lawrence cover painting.

---

* THE MAN IN HALF MOON STREET was filmed by Paramount in 1944 with Nils Asther in the title role. More recently it was re-made in England as THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH, with Anton Diffring. A novel by Barré Lyndon and Jimmy Sangster, based on the film, was released as an Avon paperback.

Rohmer's lone non-fiction book, THE ROMANCE OF SORCERY, fits as well under the classification of fantasy as anywhere else. The bulk of the book consists of biographies of five famous "sorcerers": Appolonius of Tyana, Nostradamus, Dr. John Dee, Cagliostro, and Madame Blavatsky. There are in addition chapters on the history of sorcery (in Rohmer's own unique interpretation of the word, which allows him to class the founder of Theosophy as a sorceress) and on the Inquisition and witch trials. The original British edition (1914) is a large, impressive volume, excellently illustrated. The U.S. edition (1924) is considerably abridged. Unfortunately, it would take more than mere abridgement to improve the book; it is verbose, confused, opinionated, and extremely tedious.

"MY MAN, ... RECLOTHE YOUR INDECENTLY NUDE PERSON."

Two of Rohmer's eight volumes of short stories have already been mentioned: THE DREAM DETECTIVE and BIMBASHI BARUK OF EGYPT. Both of these are collections of stories centering around the same leading character. A third volume of the same type, and Rohmer's first short story collection, is THE EXPLOITS OF CAPTAIN O'HAGAN. This book appeared only in England, although three of the six stories included were published in McClure's magazine in 1913-1914. The stories are incredibly bad. Captain Bernard O'Hagan is a demented individualist who stalks about London in a silk cape, interfering in other people's business and behaving as if the code duello had not been abolished. For example, in the first "exploit" he befriends a young lady songwriter, comments on what an unusual name she has for a person of the lower classes, beats up her fiance (who, he decides, is not good enough for her), and forces a lecherous song publisher at gun-point to purchase her songs. She, poor thing, is pathetically grateful. O'Hagan, never for a moment presuming upon his superiority of blood, kisses her hand, claps her father patronizingly on the back, and strides on to new exploits.

Rohmer's other five short story collections are more bearable. The first of these was TALES OF SECRET EGYPT. The book contains twelve stories, six of them concerning a sort of Egyptian Lamont Cranston named Abu Tabah. The stories are narrated by the Egyptian representative of a firm which specializes in manufacturing and selling copies of rare pieces of jewelry. The narrator's wild money-making schemes, always slightly shady, are invariably foiled by Abu Tabah. The remaining six stories include two fine fantasies, "Lord of the Jackals" (reprinted in Weird Tales in 1927) and "In the Valley of the Sorceress" (reprinted in Avon Fantasy Reader #12). There is also an amusing Arabian Nights-type tall tale called "Pomegranate Flower."

The next short story collection, THE HAUNTING OF LOW FENNEL, never appeared in the United States. However, six of its seven stories were reprinted in the collection TALES OF EAST AND WEST in 1932. Of the three fantasies included, "The Curse of a Thousand Kisses" is the best and most well-known; it was reprinted in the Avon Fantasy Reader #7. One of the other stories, "The Master of Hollow Grange," is a very fine borderline horror story.

Rohmer's best short story collection, and the only one to have been reprinted in paperback form, is TALES OF CHINATOWN. Six of the ten stories included form a loosely connected sequence; two of these have "Red" Kerry as the protagonist, and three others involve Paul Harley. All are very good, the best being "The Daughter of Huang Chow." Three of the remaining stories are even more memorable. "Tchorian" (reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries, July, 1951, and in several anthologies, including Dorothy Sayers' OMNIBUS OF CRIME) is an excellent fantasy, possibly the best story that Rohmer wrote. "The Dance of the Veils" and "The Hand of the Mandarin Quong" (from Munsey's Magazine) are highly effective exotic tales.

TALES OF EAST AND WEST contains, in addition to the six stories reprinted from THE HAUNTING OF LO' FENNEL, seven stories dating from 1922 to 1932, mostly from Collier's. Two of these are fantasies, but not particularly memorable ones: "Light of Atlantis" and "The Cardinal's Stair." Another is an historical adventure tale that might have come straight from the pages of Golden Fleece, had that magazine existed at that time. Entitled "Torture" in the book, it appeared in Collier's as "Two Brave Hearts." One other story is deserving of mention. In "The Turkish Yataghan" the narrator and hero of THE DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU and THE MASK OF FU MANCHU returns to London's Chinatown for a nostalgic visit, accompanied by Nayland Smith, now Assistant Commissioner of Police. The two men are immediately involved in a murder investigation. The murder turns out to be a very ordinary crime of passion, and is solved in off-hand fashion by Nayland Smith. There is no sign of Fu Manchu, and this story marks the only appearance of Nayland Smith without his arch-foe.

Rohmer's last short story collection was SALUTE TO BAZARADA AND OTHER STORIES. This again is one of the Rohmer titles published only in England, and is probably the rarest of all his books. Most of the stories included appeared in Collier's during the 1930's. Several of them involve one of Rohmer's series characters, a magician and mountebank named Bazarada. None of these stories is particularly memorable. (Three of the stories from this collection have been reprinted in Saint Detective Story Magazine during the past few years.)

During the late 1940's and early 1950's, Rohmer contributed a succession of crime stories and true-crime articles to This Week and The American Weekly, and had several stories in Blue Book. These are, without exception, negligible. The only other Rohmer stories of interest are several which have appeared in anthologies throughout the years, but were not included in any of the collections: "Fire of Baal," in MY BEST THRILLER; "The Mystery of the Panelled Room," in BEDSIDE BONANZA (edited by Frank Owen); "The Secret of the Ruins," in THE FOURTH MYSTERY COMPANION; and "Adventure of the Toadstools," in FAMOUS DETECTIVE STORIES. They are all well-done crime stories, but probably not worth tracking down unless you are a confirmed Rohmer fan.

A word of concluding advice: no matter how ardent an admirer you may be of Rohmer's work, never undertake the task of writing an article that requires a rereading of Rohmer's entire output in one continuous stretch. Nothing can do more to kill your enjoyment.

EDITORIAL FOOTNOTES (by Dick Lupoff)

1 This is also how the Baum, Burroughs, Doyle, Haggard, Mundy, Cabell, Brand, Claudy, Lovecraft, Thayer, Merritt, etc., fan is born. An interesting speculation is why the fans of the first four named authors have formed flourishing clubs, while those of the remaining authors (and of Sax Rohmer!) remain loners. Correspondence is invited regarding this question.

2 The proposed Fu Manchu television series got as far as production of a pilot film some years ago; there were no buyers on the strength of the pilot, and so the series never materialized. Chris Steinbrunner obtained a copy of the pilot for the Fantasy Film Club last year, and a viewing indicates why it did not sell. The pace was slow, the cast were unconvincing, the plot was routine spy-and-chase, and the atmosphere of exotic mystery of the better Fu Manchu stories was altogether lacking.

3 This represents a bit of apparent carelessness on Rohmer's part, in that the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, the obvious prototype of the Ringbarn circus, has its winter training quarters in Sarasota, on the west coast of Florida.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE BOOKS OF SAX ROHMER IN THE ORDER PUBLISHED

The seven titles indicated by asterisks appeared only in England. For all other titles, the data given are those for the first U.S. edition. A date in parentheses is that of the first known publication (magazine serialization or British book edition) in those cases where this differs materially from the date of the first U.S. book edition. Titles in the various series are indicated by the following code:

S - Sumuru H - Paul Harley

K - "Red" Kerry M - Gaston Max

A separate code for Fu Manchu would be superfluous, as each such book contains the name Fu Manchu in its title. Any additions, corrections, or comments on this bibliography will be eagerly welcomed. (Such communications, if sent c/o Xero, will be considered for publication in the Xero Index/Final Comments edition, and then forwarded to the author. Readers who prefer direct communication with the author should write to: Mr. Robert Briney, 459 Littleton St., West Lafayette, Indiana.)

(1) THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU MANCHU N.Y.: McBride, Nast & Co. 1913 383p
(British title: The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu)

(2) *THE SINS OF SEVERAC BABLON London: Cassell & Co., Ltd. 1914 316p

(3) *THE ROMANCE OF SORCERY London: Methuen & Co., Ltd. 1914 316p
(abridged edition, N.Y.: E. P. Dutton Co. 1924 223p)

(4) THE YELLOW CLAW (M) N.Y.: McBride, Nast & Co. 1915 427p

(5) *THE EXPLOITS OF CAPTAIN O'HAGAN London: Jarrolds 1916 231p (1913)
Contents: He Patronizes Pamela / He Clears the Course for True Love / He Meets the Leopard Lady / He Buries an Old Love / He Deals with Don Juan / He Humors the Grand Duke

(6) THE RETURN OF DR. FU MANCHU N.Y.: McBride, Nast & Co. 1916 332p (1914)
(British title: The Devil Doctor)

(7) THE HAND OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: McBride, Nast & Co. 1917 308p
(British title: The Si Fan Mysteries)

(8) *THE ORCHARD OF TEARS London: Methuen & Co., Ltd. 1918 250p

(9) TALES OF SECRET EGYPT N.Y.: R. M. McBride & Co. 1919 313p
Contents: Tales of Abu Tabah (The Yashmak of Pearls / The Death-Ring of Sneferu / Lady of the Lattice / Omar of Ispahan / Breath of Allah / The Whispering Mummy); Lord of the Jackals / Lure of Souls / The Secret of Ismail / Harun Pasha / In the Valley of the Sorceress / Pomegranate Flower

(10) THE QUEST OF THE SACRED SLIPPER Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1919 293p (1913)

(11) DOPE (K) N.Y.: R. M. McBride & Co. 1919 385p

(12) THE GOLDEN SCORPION (M) N.Y.: R. M. McBride & Co. 1920 308p

(13) THE GREEN EYES OF BAST N.Y.: R. M. McBride & Co. 1920 311p

(14) *THE HAUNTING OF LOW FENNEL London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd. 1920 252p
Contents: title story / The Valley of the Just / The Blue Monkey / The Riddle of Ragstaff / The Master of Hollow Grange / The Curse of a Thousand Kisses / The Turquoise Necklace

(15) BAT WING (H) Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1921 333p

(16) FIRE TONGUE (H) Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co.. 1922 304p

(17) TALES OF CHINATOWN Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1922 376p
Contents: The Daughter of Huang Chow (K) / Kerry's Kid (K) / The Pigtail of Hi Wing Ho / The House of Golden Joss (K) / The Man with the Shaven Skull (H) / The White Hat (H) / Tcheriapin / The Dance of the Veils / The Hand of the Mandarin Quong / The Key of the Temple of Heaven

[18] ROUND IN 50 London Hippodrome, 1922 (musical play)

[19] THE EYE OF SIVA New Theater (London), 1923 (melodrama)

(20) BROOD OF THE WITCH QUEEN Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1924 334p 278p (1914)

(21) GREY FACE Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1924 331p

(22) THE DREAM DETECTIVE Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1925 309p (1012)
Contents: The Tragedies in the Greek Room / The Potsherd of Anubis / The Crusder's Ax / The Ivory Statue / The Blue Rajah / The Whispering Poplars / The Chord in G / The Headless Mummies / The Haunting of Grange / The Veil of Isis

(23) YELLOW SHADOWS (K) Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1926 299p

(24) MOON OF MADNESS Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1927 233p

(25) SHE WHO SLEEPS Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1928 322p

(26) THE EMPEROR OF AMERICA N.Y.: The Crime Club 1929 310p

(27) THE BOOK OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: R. M. McBride & Co. 1929
(an omnibus volume containing the first three Fu Manchu books and THE GOLDEN SCORPION)

(28) THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED (M) N.Y.: The Crime Club 1930 306p

(29) DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931 316p

(30) YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS N.Y.: The Crime Club 1932 312p

(31) THE MASK OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: The Crime Club 1932 330p

(32) TALES OF EAST AND WEST N.Y.: The Crime Club 1933 345p
Contents: I. Tales of the East: The Black Mandarin (H) / The Valley of the Just / The Turquoise Necklace / The Curse of a Thousand Kisses / Spirit of the Black Hawk / The Turkish Yataghan / Light of Atlantis
II. Tales of the West: The Haunting of Low Fennel / At the Palace da Nostra (H) / The Master of Hollow Grange / The Cardinal's Stair / The Riddle of Ragstaff / Torture

(33) FU MANCHU'S BRIDE N.Y.: The Crime Club 1933 319p

(34) THE TRAIL OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: The Crime Club 1934 329p

(35) THE BAT FLIES LOW N.Y.: The Crime Club 1935 314p

(36) PRESIDENT FU MANCHU N.Y.: The Crime Club 1936 342p

(37) WHITE VELVET Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1936 337p

(38) THE GOLDEN SCORPION OMNIBUS N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap 1938
Contents: The Golden Scorpion / Dope

(39) A SAX ROHMER OMNIBUS N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap 1938
Contents: The Yellow Claw / Tales of Secret Egypt

(40) *SALUTE TO BAZARADA AND OTHER STORIES London: Cassell & Co., Ltd. 1938 311p
Contents: title story / The Mummy of Cleopatra / Death in the King's Room / The Jade Serpent / The Red Doctor / The Tunnel of Apes / Black Magic / Limehouse Rhapsody

(41) THE DRUMS OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: The Crime Club 1939 308p

(42) THE ISLAND OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: The Crime Club 1941 299p

(43) SEVEN SINS (M) M.Y.: R. M. McBride &co. 1944 312p

(44) BIMBÂSHI BARÛK OF EGYPT N.Y.: R. M. McBride & Co. 1944 312p
(British title: Egyptian Nights)
Contents: Mystery Strikes at Ragstaff Hill / The Bimbâshi Meets Up with A14 / Murder Strikes in Lynchgate / The Laughing Buddha Finds a Purchaser / Warning from Rose of the Desert / Lotus Yuan Loses Her Vanity Case / The Scarab of Lapis Lazuli / Vengeance at the Lily Pool / Adventure in the Libyan Desert / Pool-o'-the-Moon Sees Bimbâshi Barûk

(45) THE SHADOW OF FU MANCHU N.Y.: The Crime Club 1948 190p

(46) HANGOVER HOUSE N.Y.: Random House 1949 244p

(47-48-49-50-52) NUDE IN MINK (Br. Sins of Sumuru), SUMURU (Br. Slaves of Sumuru), THE FIRE GODDESS (Br. Virgin in Flames), RETURN OF SUMURU (Br. Sand and Satin), SINISTER MADONNA (all S) all N.Y.: Fawcett Gold Medal, years 1950, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1956 174p, 159p, 192p, 172p, 128p respectively

(51) *THE MOON IS RED London: Herbert Jenkins 1954 188p

(53) RE-ENTER FU MANCHU N.Y.: Fawcett Gold Medal 1957 144p

(54) EMPEROR FU MANCHU N.Y.: Fawcett Gold Medal 1959 190p

HLOROPHENE

Chapter I. Fog-Phantoms of Doom

The greenish tendrils of the fog drifted through the nighted streets, as I made my weary way home from a fruitless day of clue-hunting. Fog coiled about the glowing streetlights and brushed clammy fingers against my bobbing cluster of toy balloons, as I clambered, puffing, up a fire escape ladder onto the roof. Must reach my flat unnoticed...and those sinister Oriental Fiends were everywhere! Even here, on the rooftops, it was impossible to see your Wembley before your face. Fog-streamers drifted in greenish-yellow whorls, like ghosts, about the hooded silhouettes of water tank and TV aerial. I had made my way thus far by street, but in the fog the White Christian British imagination plays strange tricks, creating shadowy figures from fog and shadow. Fog phantoms! Every doorway or alley-mouth seemed crawling with sinister shadowy figures, slanty-eyed, yellow skinned. Filthy disgusting treacherous yellow Chinks! Nips and Chinks! Echhh!

Chapter II. The Yellow Peril

Think not, Reader, that I am intolerant of our sneaky Yellow Cousins! Far from it. Why, some of my best friends are Yellow Oriental Fiends. But in the long years that I have struggled (over six continents, seven seas, and virtually innumerable peninsulae), against that fiendish sinister Secret Organization, the Sci-Fen, I have come to loath the very sound of such words as "Suzie Wong" or "No Tickee, No Washee" or "Milton Caniff". Echhhh! Slimy devils! Only I know the Yellow Menace hiding at the heart of our White Anglo-Saxon Christian English-Speaking Civilization. Gooks! Nips, Chinks and Gooks! Echhhhhh!

Kiss The Blood
Off My Dacoits

Chapter III. Man of Many Faces

I have been forced to adopt innumerous disguises, to keep free of their nasty dirty Yellow claws! I was, at the moment, cleverly disguised as a one-eyed hump-backed Gypsy Balloon Vendor. Little did they realize my "hump" concealed a duo-directional radio apparatus, my "balloons" were radio aerials, and my "beard" a brilliantly-disguised microphone. I'd track those Yellow Fiends to their secret lair, or my name wasn't Sir Nayland Smith-Dennis! And yet, someday, the very multiplicity of my disguises would betray me...into the slimy grasping claws of that Sinister Oriental Villain, that Criminal Genius, known only to the world as -- DOCTOR GHU FANCHU!

Chapter IV. The Devil-Doctor

GHU FANCHU! Yes, the fiendish Oriental Scientist was at his unholy work again. Armed with his tear-gas-impregnated roses, his envenomed cockroaches, his miniature-radio-carrying spiders, his razor-edged-rocket-propelled boomerangs and his Malay dwarfs, he again threatened the peace, welfare, security and White Supremacy of the Western World! GHU FANCHU! I can see him now, his towering figure, his bald brow, the face half-Satan, half-Seraph! In my mind's eye I conjure the memory of those slitted emerald eyes occasionally filmed with deep thought, as he strokes, idly, with a yellow fore-finger, the soft fur of his pet platypus ("Ming the Merciless"), whilst his agile but malignant genius busily intrigues new horrors of indescribably filthy Chinese Evil against the peace-loving West! GHU FANCHU! The very name reminds one of slinky Yellow Hordes, or nasty dirty Opium Dens, ...and also, it reminds me to get my underclothing back from the (ech!) Chinese Laundry across the way, or I shall run out of clean small-linens! GHU FANCHU -- blecchh!

Chapter V. Ghu Fanchu Strikes!

Ah, what new deviltry was the Mad Yellow Genius up to now? With his hordes of mutated boll weevils, poisoned orchids, sinister thuggee and trained scorpions! His nauseating but cunning mind had already worked untold Horrors against the peace of the world! First he kidnapped Warner B. Oland from peaceful Hollywood ...then he saturated the wet concrete before Grauman's Chinese Theatre with live athlete's-foot virus...finally, the penultimate blow! He attempted to stir the Mysterious (and sickening) East behind his Yellow Banners, by stealing that mighty and legended talisman -- The Mummified Left Ear-Lobe of Mata Hari!

Chapter VI. Treasures of the Ages

Yet, as I reflected, whilst entering my flat through a sliding trap-door in the roof, had I not bested the Mad Doctor's evil-fraught plans before? Had I not restrained him from seizing such Mystic Treasures as the Ring of Cleopatra? The Sword of Genghis Khan? The Toothpick of Holy Buddha? Had I not battled unwearingly against his sinister plots to use against the West (for what unholy purposes, my White Christian English-Speaking Western soul dare not imagine) the Napkin-Ring of Zoroaster? The Tie-Clip of Confucius? The Pocket-Handkerchief of Mr. Moto? All his Eastern hordes of cannibal-plants, flying fungus spores, radio-controlled cobras and hashish-impregnated Hershey Bars had not availed against True Anglo-Saxon Courage and British Christian Freedom-Loving Integrity!

Chapter VII. Room of Doom

With a sigh of relief, I checked the various locks and seals, and found the flat safe from the Yellow Monster's slimy touch. I hastily removed my disguise, downed a triple scotch-and-soda, and was leafing through the latest copy of Yellow Horror Monthly, when a sensation of urgent pressure on the genito-urinary system made a quick trip to the Gent's advisable. Propping the seat I was about to Relieve Nature when...instead of looking down into a porcelain bowl filled with tepid water, I found myself staring at...GHU FANCHU! Aldkk!

Chapter VIII. Message of Horror

Yes, GHU FANCHU! As I stared into his slitted emerald eyes (slightly filmed with thought in the upper left-hand corners) I found myself rendered immobile by the Yellow Monster's hypnotic powers! Then it began, the shrill whispering voice that often haunts my dreams: "Sir Smith Nayland-Dennis! This is Doctor Ghu Fanchu, speaking! During your absence, my dacoits, thuggee and Malay dwarfs secreted a cunningly devised television receiver in your toilet bowl! I take this means to inform you that my plot to seize the Ear-Lobe of Mata Hari was only a clever ruse! My true intent was to rob England of her greatest treasure, the Royalty Checks of Pearl S. Buck! Yes, I inform you of this, and also that our Sneaky Yellow Agents will strike within one hour! But you will be helpless to frustrate the schemes of the Sci-Fen this time, Sir Dennis Smith-Nayland! As you shall soon discover!" As I stared, rapt with horror, the sneering yellow visage vanished and became a simple toilet-bowl again! What did it all mean?

Chapter IX. Smith on the Move!

Not even waiting to micturate, I sprang into action. I had planned a quiet evening of pasting up my press-notices in a scrapbook, but no sacrifice was too great when I and I alone stood between the slithering tentacles of the Yellow Menace which, even now, curled fiendishly about the White Throat of Western Civilization! Into my next disguise, that of a notch-eared Bulgarian fruit-seller with a limp! Then out -- into the night! Put that into your slimy opium pipe and smoke it, Dr. Ghu Fanchu!

Chapter X. Stroke of Fate

A sibillant striration! The telephone! Was it a trick? Perhaps the receiver was impregnated with incurable charley-horse virus? Perhaps it was wired to a clever atomic disintegrator-ray propped in the chandelier! No -- I must chance it!

Chapter XI. Smith's Courage in Action

Greatly daring, I picked up the telephone!

Chapter XII. Mystery Voice

"Are you there?" I said, rasping harshly.

Chapter XIII. Consternation

"Wha-at?" I gasped...

Chapter XIV. The Doctor -- Strikes!

Weakly, I put down the phone. It was useless! The Doctor had outwitted me again. Now I would be helpless -- utterly helpless -- to prevent his sinister dacoits from stealing the talisman! I had forgotten the date...tonight was the night that Local Chapter 36 of the John Birch Society met, and I was host! I dare not stir from my flat -- not with the impending election of Grand High Imperial Arch Wizard, to which high post I aspired! It was awful, to allow the Sinister Yellow Horde to strike at the very heart of Britain, stealing from our very hands the priceless Royalty Checks of Pearl S. Buck, but I was helpless!

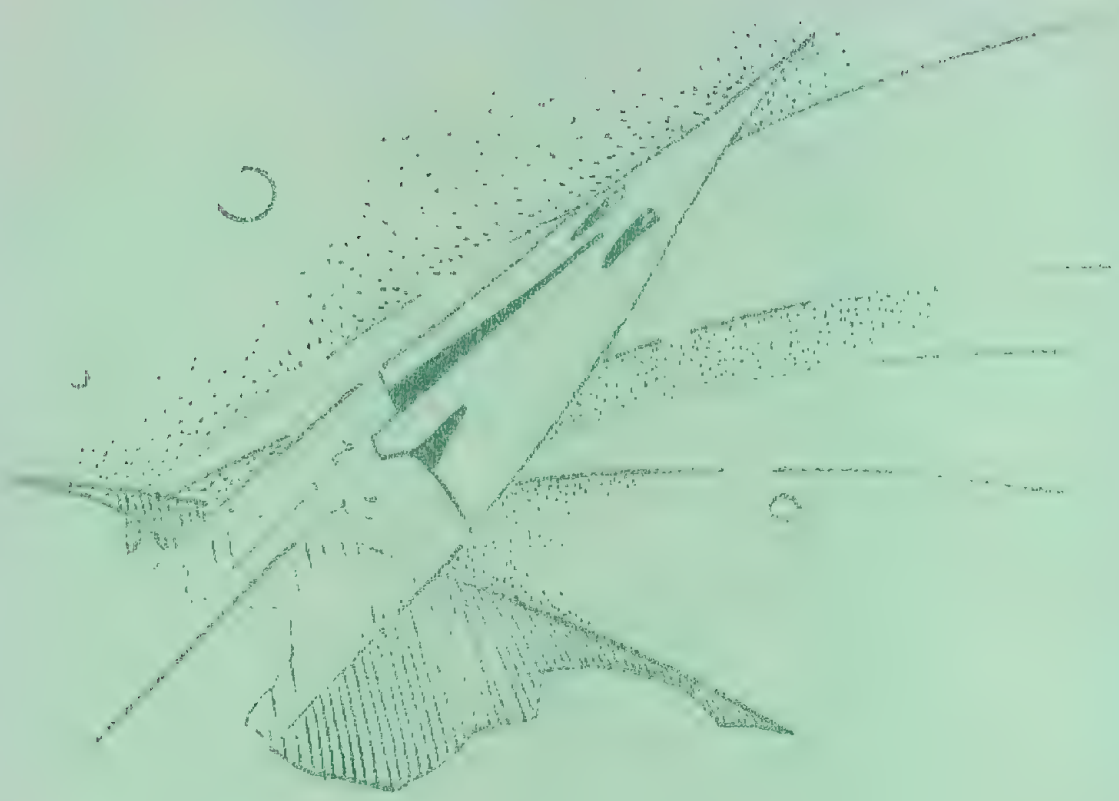
Chapter XV. Helpless!

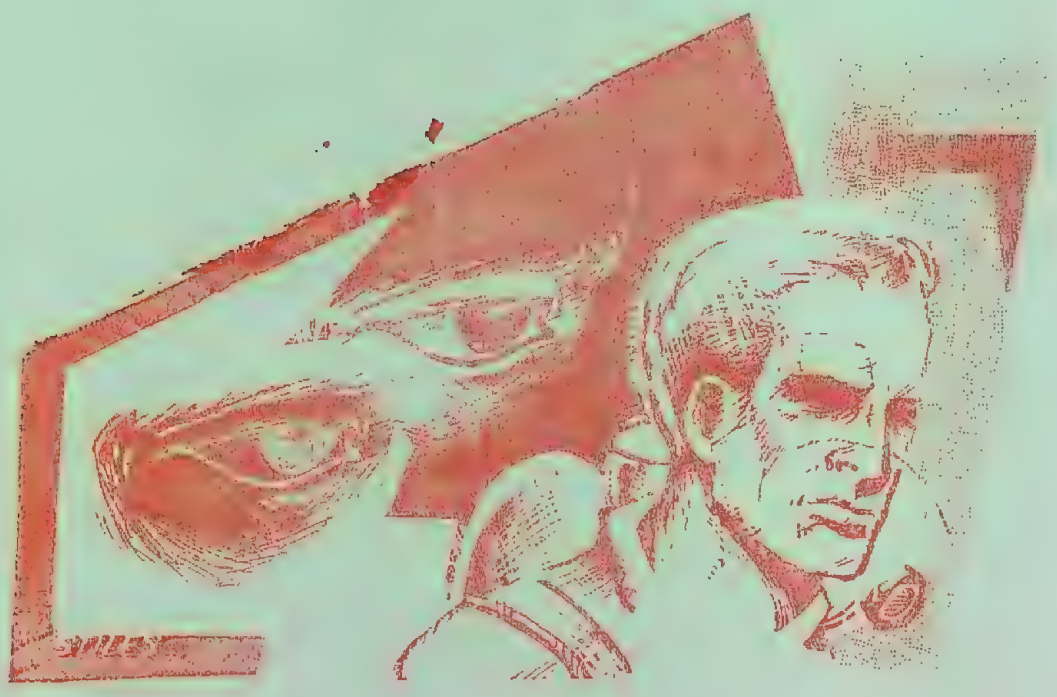
Yes -- helpless!

Chapter XVI. "Next Time, Ghu Fanchu"!

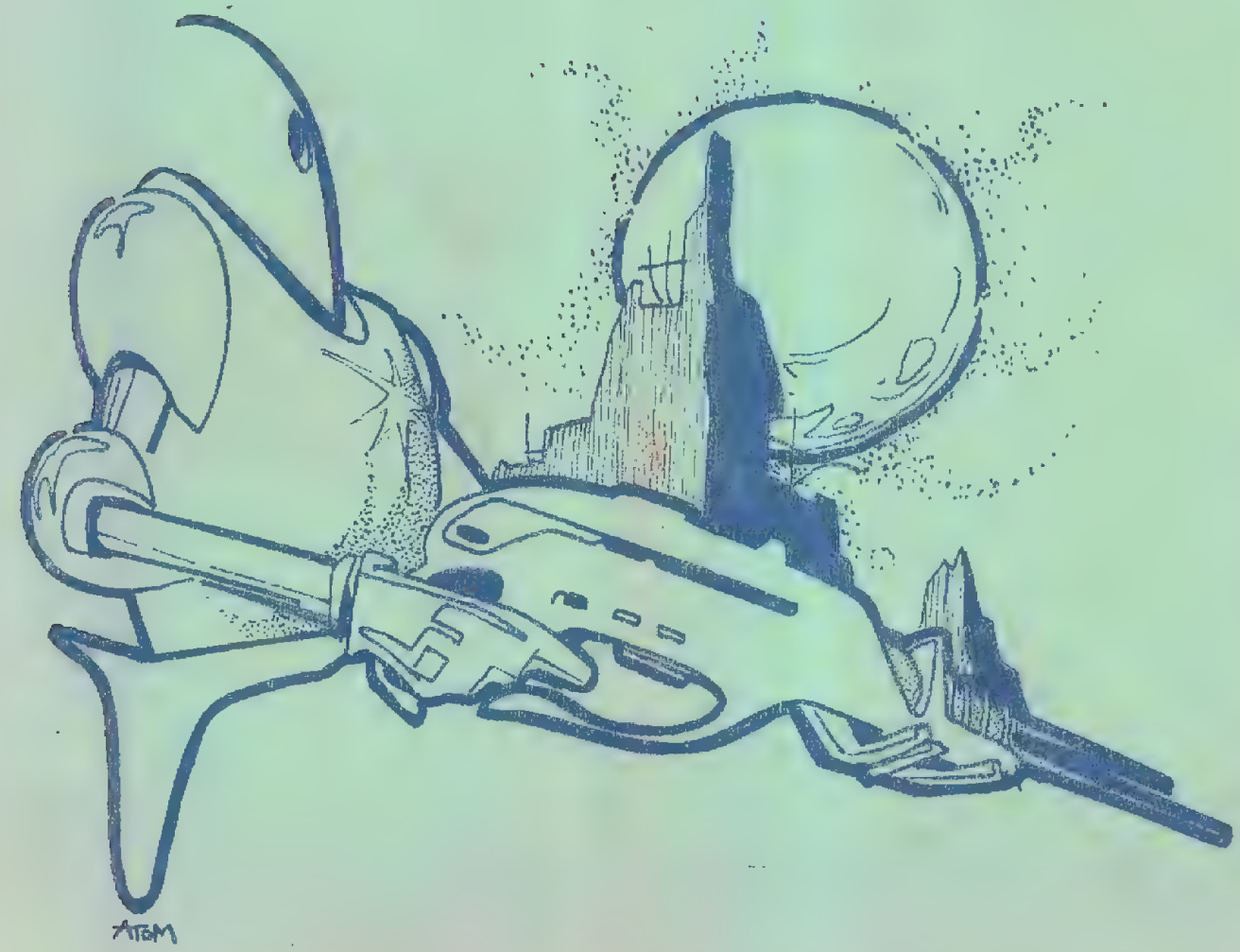
With a weary sigh, I began straightening the apartment. "You win this round," I grated, harshly, "but -- next time, Ghu Fanchu!"

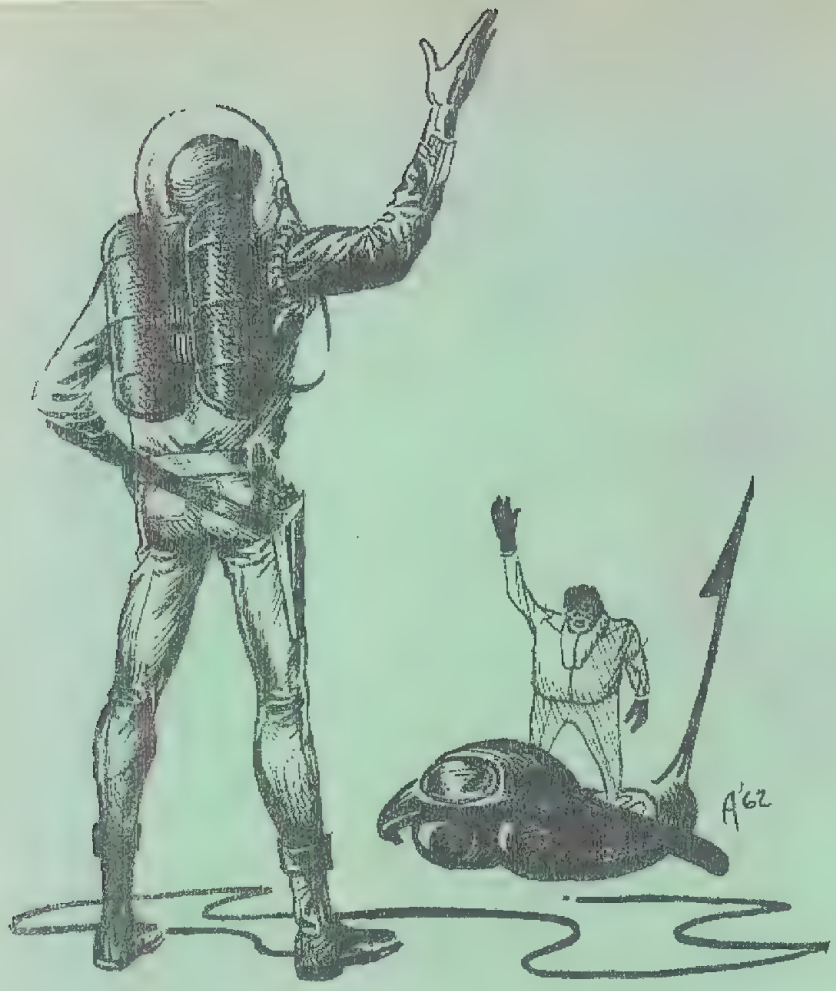
I seemed to hear a hideous gloating laughter, ringing out through the fog-shrouded streets.....



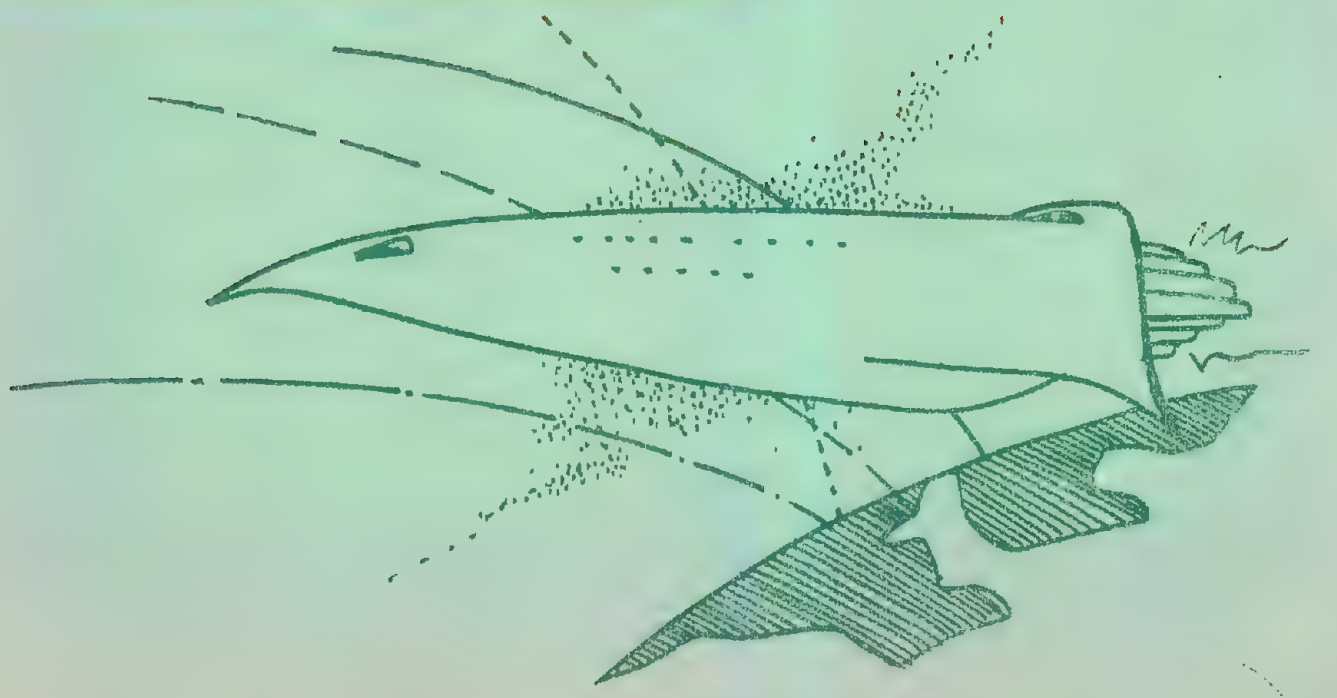


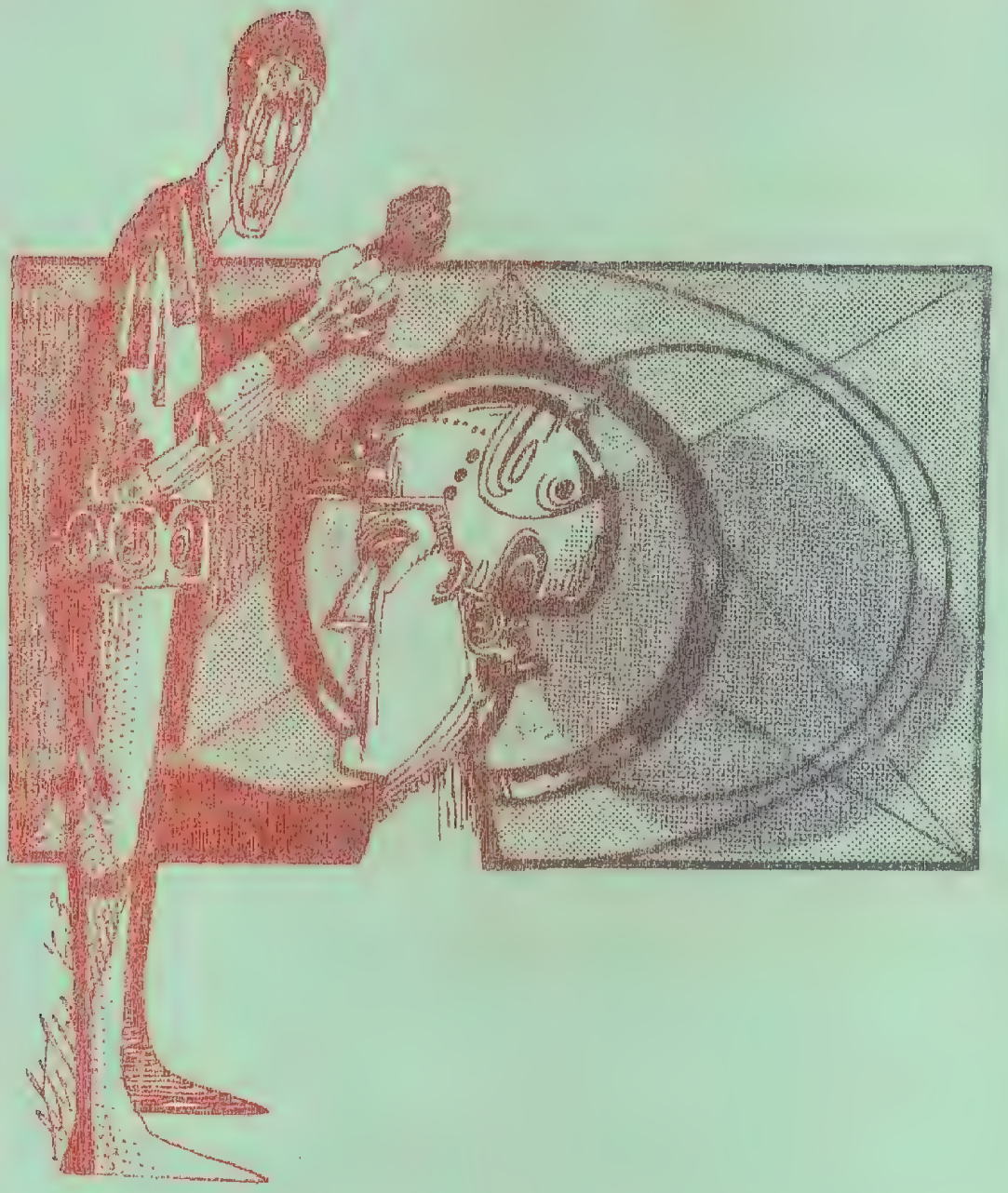
Arthur Thompson
Dan Adkins
Eddie Jones
Steve Stiles
and
bhob stewart
Explore Outer Space


ATOM


A'62

SPACE MADNESS





I am the very model of a Comic Book Enthusiast,
- No epicure, philatelist, gourmet, gourmand or pederast -
I've twenty thousand, buckram-bound, which I index and annotate:
It is the King of Hobbies, sir, which firmly I asseverate !

I read them by the hour (a delight most inexhaustible)
And buy them by the peck and pound (a hobby, sir, most costible).
Than waste my wealth on wine or food (and pay the toxicologist),
I'd rather be a happy (although hungry) Comicologist !

No book-collector, taxidermist, exegist or orgiast,
I am the very model of a Comic Book Enthusiast.

I know my Masked Crime Fighters to their slightest esoterica,
Like Captains Marvel, Midnight, Atom, 3-D and America.
The ones that swim like fish, or run so fast their costume scorches,
The ones that fly like birds and those who burn like human "torches".

I study all the magic ones, the minor and the principal,
From Mandrake the Magician down to Ibis the Invincible:
The ones who criminology combine with powers quizical,
Like Doctor Fate, Zatara, and their brothers metaphysical.

No bibliophile, numismatist, SF-fan or fantasiast,
I am the very model of a Comic Book Enthusiast.

The ones who say "Shazam!" as though it were a very habit,
The man, the boy, the little girl, the uncle, and the rabbit;
The one whom kryptonite unmans, the pair from Gotham City,
Who in their private lives are meek and mild as Walter Mitty.

I like the ones who zip around in rocket ships, atomical
Like Flash, and Buck, and Brick et al ... I find their antics comical;
As well as leopard-pelted ones, the jungle lords, tyrannical,
Like Sheena, Kaanga, and the whole damn brotherhood, tarzanical !

— Lin Carter

TWO FLASHES MEET THE PURPLE Slagheap!

by Landon Chesney

WHAT HO, HERE WE ARE — A GOOD SOLID HEROIC BREAK-FAST OF MILK N' NANAS N' PEP..!
AGH!
'LANG 'LANG
'LANG 'LANG
IT NEVER FAILS — SIT DOWN TO BREAKFAST... AND THE BLAGDASTED SECRET ALARM SOUNDS
CRINCH!
WELL — INTO THE OLD SECRET IDENTITY AND I'M OFF TO ANSWER THE CALL!
LANG LANG
UNDOUBTEDLY MY ARCH NEMESIS THE PURPLE SLAGHEAP IS UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS AGAIN...
WUP! HOLD ON... WHO ARE YOU IN THE RED UNDERWEAR?
WHY, I'M THE FLASH! WHO ARE YOU?
SCREE!

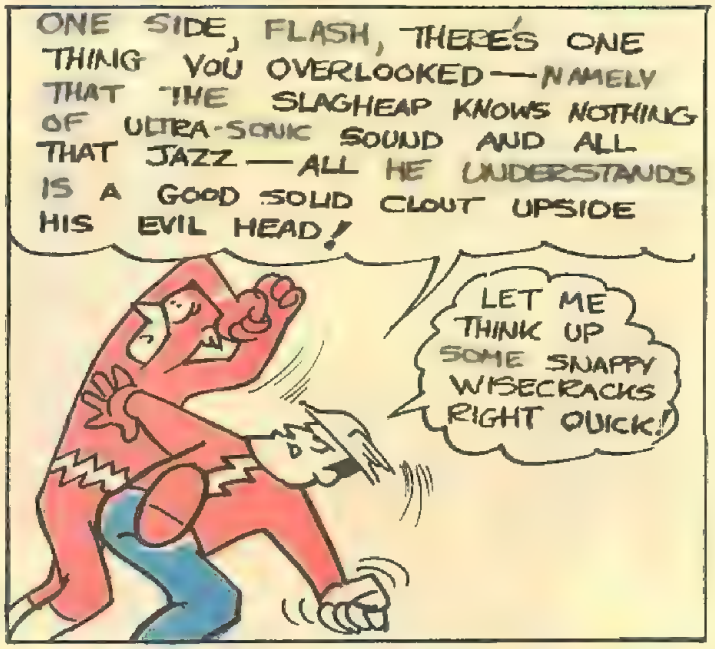
NOW HOLD ON, BUDDY, I DON'T MIND ANOTHER HERO WORKING MY DISTRICT—BUT USING MY NAME IS GOING TOO FAR···!
OH, THEN YOU MUST BE THE "THIS-WORLD" FLASH! JUST THE MAN I'M LOOKIN' FOR!
THE "THIS-WORLD FLASH"— SAY, WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT, MAC?
WELL, THERES TWO EARTHS, SEE, YOUR EARTH AND THE EARTH I COME FROM— BOTH ARE PARALLEL— RIGHT DOWN TO HAVING A FLASH A PIECE— I'M THE FLASH OF MY WORLD!
WELL— HOORAY FOR YOU— NOW HOW 'BOUT STEPPIN' ASIDE— I GOTTA GO CATCH TH' PURPLE SLAGHEAP!
ER— WOULD YOU MIND IF I TAG ALONG— I WANT TO SORT OF OBSERVE YOUR TECHNIQUE!
OKAY, KID— BUT KEEP OUTTA TH' WAY!
?
BLUR
WELL, I'LL HAVE TO GIVE YOU CREDIT FOR ONE THING, CLOWN, YER ALMOST AS FAST AS I AM!
ZOOM!
ZING!
GEE THANKS, FLASH!—ER— I WONDER IF YOU COULD TELL ME SOMETHING?
SURE, KID WHAT IS IT?
WELL, HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR HELMET ON AT FASTER-THAN SOUND SPEEDS?
2

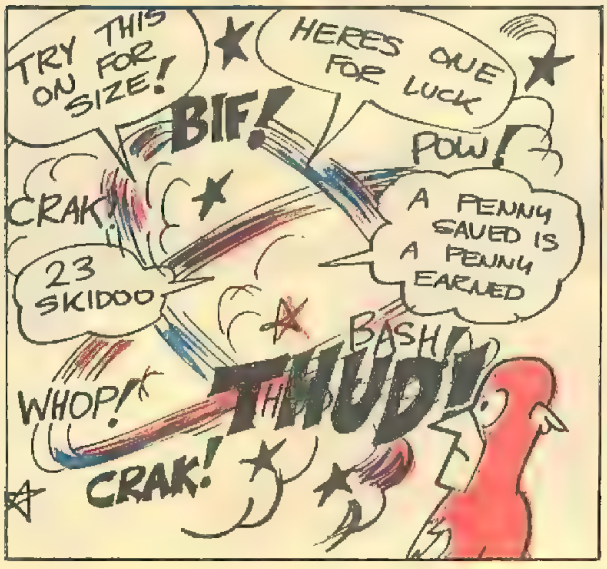
?
SKREEEEEEEEEE...
IK! IK! IK! IK!
WHAT'RE YOU TRYIN' T'DO, WISE GUY, DESTROY THE SENSE OF WONDER?
WELL, GOSH, FLASH I DIDN'T---!
AH, CAP IT—WE GOT WORK T'DO — THERE'S THE PURPLE SLAGHEAP JUST AHEAD!
GOODNESS—! WHAT A FEARSOME BEAST!
GO AHEAD, KID! BE MY GUEST— I'LL LET YOU TAKE HIM!
URG
ALRIGHT, I'LL DEMONSTRATE THE ULTRA-SCIENTIFIC METHODS OF CRIMINAL APPREHENSION OF MY WORLD!
SRIK!
SRIK!
FIRST I'LL WHISTLE ABOUT HIM AT SPEEDS IN EXCESS OF SOUND SO AS TO HOPELESSLY CONFUSE HIM!
MMM
ZOW!
THEN—I'LL SURROUND HIM IN A COLUMN OF AIR CONTAINING A VACUUM SO'S TO REDUCE HIS BASAL METABOLISM TO A STATE NEAR ZERO!
MMM

THEN, A STACCATO PATTERN OF ULTRA-SONIC SPEEDS INTERSPACED WITH SUB-SONIC SPEEDS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THE SLAGHEAP'S CARDIAC FLUCTUATIONS WILL RENDER HIM COMPLETELY HELPLESS!
MMM

VIOLA!

URG!
BASH!


ONE SIDE, FLASH, THERE'S ONE THING YOU OVERLOOKED — NAMELY THAT THE SLAGHEAP KNOWS NOTHING OF ULTRA-SONIC SOUND AND ALL THAT JAZZ — ALL HE UNDERSTANDS IS A GOOD SOLID CLOUT UPSIDE HIS EVIL HEAD!
LET ME THINK UP SOME SNAPPY WISECRACKS RIGHT QUICK!


TRY THIS ON FOR SIZE!
HERES ONE FOR LUCK
BIF!
POW!
CRAK!
A PENNY SAVED IS A PENNY EARNED
23 SKIDOO
BASH!
WHOP!
THUD!
CRAK!

VIOLA!
AMAZING— DADGUMMIT..!

WELL, I MUST VIBRATE BACK INTO MY OWN DIMENSION NOW— SO LONG, FLASH-OF-THIS-WORLD!
TAKE IT EASY, KID!
ZING!
ZING! ZING! ZING!
POOF!
THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA OF HOW TO BE RID OF YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL YOU DREADED MENACE YOU — HERE GIMME YER ARM!
URG?
ZING! ZING! ZING! ZING! ZING!
POOF
WELL, SO MUCH FOR THE PURPLE SLAG HEAP — GUESS I'LL HAVE ME A LITTLE REST FOR A CHANGE — HMF, I WONDER HOW THE OTHER-WORLD-FLASH IS GETTING ALONG...
... TRY THIS ON FER SIZE... HERES ONE FER LUCK... A PENNY SAVED IS...
URG
5
END

PART 10

ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME

A few evenings ago I watched the dark, serious, Indian-carved face of Tom Mix split into a brief smile as he lifted the big white hat from his head to salute a young school marm and the two of her charges (a boy and a girl, of course) who stood stoutly on each side of her. Then Tom clapped that hat over his straight, black hair, vaulted up into Tony's saddle, and as the boy and the girl and the school marm waved, Tom and Tony leaped a high split-rail fence and vanished off toward the horizon.

Beside me, eyes glittering in the blue light from the television set, a boy of cowboy movie age said, "Gee, you know, he looked like a real cowboy!"

A while back I stopped at a used car lot to admire the automobile they had all waxed and shiny up on the display platform. It was a 1937 Cord, low slung, coffin hooded, with its chrome supercharger coils gleaming in the pale winter sun -- and it was just as beautiful as I ever remembered it.

Last summer, a week or so after I'd argued (without much affect) that a lot of kids' toys were not as well made as they used to be, I ran across a carefully wrapped package under a heap of old letters and papers I'd been going through. When I opened it -- the rubber bands had lost all their stretch and broke the minute I touched them -- I found a cap gun, a silver-bright cap gun with well simulated engraving and ivory handles bearing the raised heads of two longhorns. It was a model of a Gold .45 revolver, with a revolving cylinder and a hammer that could be set on half cock or full cock. There was almost a whole roll of caps in the revolver, too, and even they, some of them, still fired. How it got in that box, I don't know, but I remember buying it twenty-four years ago in Stockton, California, for seventy-nine cents.

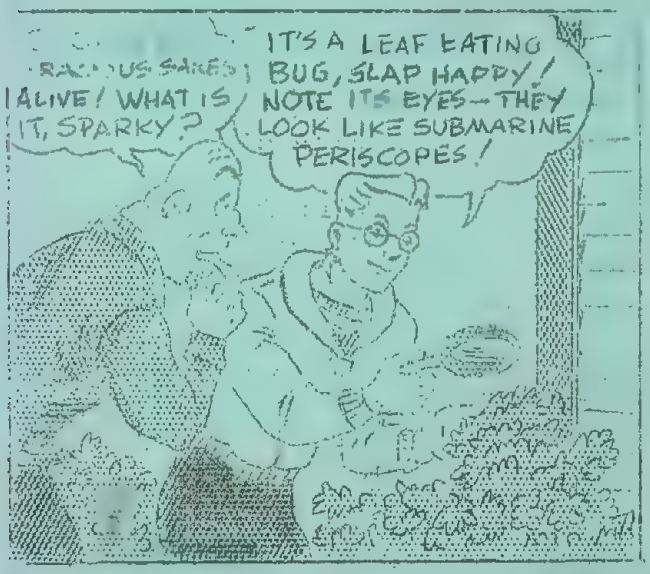
The boy who likes cowboy movies has it now. It's the best looking six-shooter in the neighborhood, and probably the best looking one in town. They just don't make cap guns the way they used to.

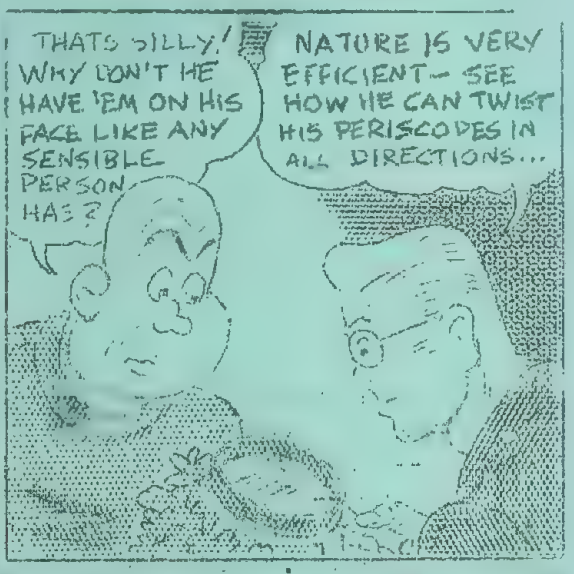
And yesterday, while I was leafing through a picture album, I discovered the photograph of a little girl I was nuttier than a fruitcake about when I was ten years old. She wasn't skinny, she didn't wear glasses an inch thick, her hair was not in braids, her teeth were not in braces. She was cuter than a bug's ear.

Nostalgia is the remembrance of a time when we loved. And like love itself it accepts uncaring the bad things with the good. It's always a pleasure, then, when reality justifies our memories of those things we loved -- things like Tom Mix and the '37 Cord and an ivory handled cap gun and a little girl named Valerie.

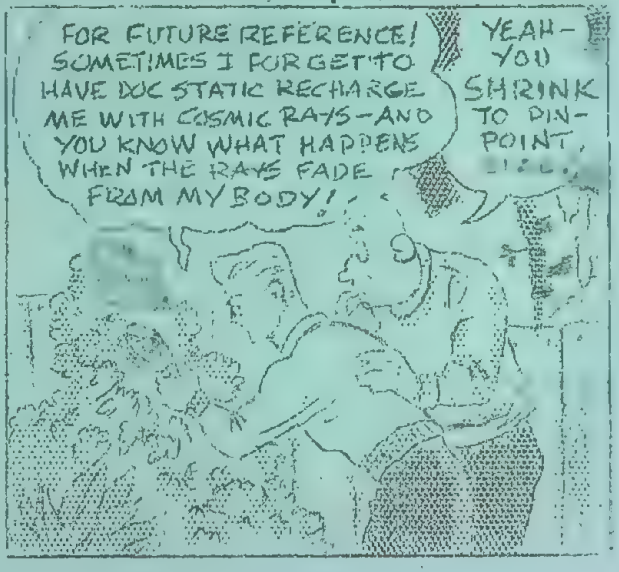
And things like "Sparky Watts, the World's Strongest Funnyman."

SPARKY WATTS




THATS SILLY! WHY DON'T HE HAVE 'EM ON HIS FACE LIKE ANY SENSIBLE PERSON HAS?
NATURE IS VERY EFFICIENT— SEE HOW HE CAN TWIST HIS PERISCOPES IN ALL DIRECTIONS...

...HE DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP EATING WHILE HE LOOKS AROUND FOR GREENER PASTURES!
WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THESE TINY VARMINTS? YOU'VE BEEN LOOKIN' AT 'EM ALL DAY!


FOR FUTURE REFERENCE! SOMETIMES I FORGET TO HAVE DOC STATIC RECHARGE ME WITH COSMIC RAYS—AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE RAYS FADE FROM MY BODY!
YEAH— YOU SHRINK TO PIN-POINT SIZE.

and the BIG SHOTS

by RICHARD KYLE

illustrations adapted by Jim Moriarty

Sparky Watts didn't look like the average comic hero. He was average looking. He parted his hair right down the middle, wore glasses, looked pleasant, and had a taste for sport shirts and sweaters and slacks. The only time he wore a costume like the other comic heroes it was blasted off him by duck hunters.

Sparky didn't act like the average comic hero, either. He was stronger than almost all of them for one thing -- and in a showdown I wouldn't have bet on Superman or Captain Marvel. For another, he never became involved with a mad scientist. Doc Static, the man who made Sparky strong, was as sane as they come, although maybe a little absent minded. And then Sparky chased girls and they chased him -- and that wasn't like the average comic hero at all.

Sparky could fly by flapping his arms real fast. When he took off his glasses he had X-ray vision (the glass stopped the rays). He once came close to causing a hurricane when he wiggled his ears. He could cure most diseases with a diathermy wave that flowed from his fingertips. Sparky could run faster, jump farther, dive deeper, and come up drier than anyone on earth.

Sparky's friends were something, too. The other comic heroes only had interesting enemies; Sparky had interesting friends and his enemies didn't amount to a hill of beans, aside from Hitler & Company, that is. There was Doc Static, of course, who had made Sparky strong with his Cosmic Ray Machine. (Doc Static had also invented the Glamour Ray -- which gave whoever was exposed to it more sex appeal than anybody -- and an Invisibility Ray, and co-invented a wartime blackout light that worked in the daytime, and you name it.) Doc Static also helped invent, or at least develop, a daughter named Sally who was quite a dish. There was Treetop, who was so tall you never saw his face: his head always stuck up out of the top of the panel. And Dotty Dash, who was quite a dish. There was Slap Happy, an ex-fighter who had the biggest, strongest feet in the world because they'd gotten an overdose from Doc Static's Cosmic Ray Machine. There was Sue, Sparky's foster sister, who was quite a dish. There was Halfpint, Sally's baby, who'd gotten charged up on Cosmic Rays and was almost as strong as Sparky. And Hedy Hodgers, the daughter of the owner of the baseball team Sparky played on for a while (he pitched a no hit, no foul, no run game, naturally), who was quite a dish. There was Yoo Hoo, a little Chinese refugee boy. And Lady Teacake, a little English refugee girl. There was Fran Hotchkiss, who was quite a dish. And Eve, who was quite a dish. And the female residents of New Arthur, a hidden country peopled by descendents of King Arthur, and who were a whole set of dishes. Sparky's friends were something.

Sparky was born in the June 1941 issue of Big Shot Comics. And although he made five million dollars when he laid a pipeline from Texas to New York back in the winter of 1942, he continued to work for the same comic book for the rest of his career. Like many of his contemporaries, he retired early in the '50s when bookings fell off, but I'm sure the only reason he did was because he could afford it and the work wasn't too interesting any more; unlike most of the others who came up with him, he had more than youth and a hard bicep to sell -- Sparky had talent.

Sparky Watts wasn't the only talent at Big Shot. The Face was there. And Skyman. And Vincent Sullivan. Vincent Sullivan is kind of an odd name for a comic hero, but he was an authentic one, all right, and one of the biggest.

I don't know where Vincent Sullivan made his first appearance in comic books. I don't know whether it was in the early thirties or the middle thirties. But by 1937 when I began to read the comics with a critical eye he was appearing in every issue of Detective Comics and More Fun Comics and Adventure Comics -- and when Action Comics came out in the middle of 1938 he appeared there, too, running just opposite Superman. Unlike some of the men who have come after him, he was not ashamed of his job; his name was listed on the masthead of every issue. Vincent Sullivan was the comic books' first really important editor.

Vincent Sullivan published the very early work of Superman's creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, "Doctor Occult" and "Federal Men," and it was he who accepted "Superman" for the first issue of Action Comics. I've heard many stories of the discovery of that strip, but I've never heard two that completely agree. Maybe only Siegel and Shuster know, now, just who "discovered" their creation. I do know that in 1947, after they had lost the court fight to recover their title to "Superman," Vincent Sullivan -- now a comic publisher himself -- was the man they chose to issue their new comic, the happily begun but ill-fated Funnyman. By then, ten full years had passed since Sullivan had bought their first strip. The relationship must have been more than a business one.

After the publication of Bob Kane's "Batman" in Detective Comics, the founding of the Superman comic book, and the development of new comic strips in other titles, Sullivan left DC Comics. Big Shot Comics for May 1940 appeared, and soon there were a whole barrage of issues with now familiar words, "Vincent Sullivan, Editor," soaring above the masthead. The comic fans figured a good new magazine had come out. They were right.

Big Shot Comics featured "America's National Hero," Skyman, on most of the early covers, but inside, before Sparky Watts, he shared the honors with The Face, whose grotesque appearance did not make good cover material, perhaps, but whose comic was one of the finest adventure strips ever created. When Sparky came along in the fourteenth issue, the three of them formed a group even a modern D'Artagnan could not have joined.

There were other original stories, of course -- those were the days when every comic book gave you sixty-four pages for a dime -- but they never counted for much against the Big Three. At one time or another you could read about Captain Devildog, of the U.S. Marines; or adventurer Rocky Ryan, drawn by Paul Reinman; or Marvelo, Monarch of Magicians; or Spy-Chief, a cloaked hero who was sometimes drawn by Mart Bailey; or Fred Guardineer's Moon Man, who acquired super powers while the moon was up; or Mortimer the Monk and Mike the Mascot, one-pagers drawn by the one-page king, Fred Schwab. But although they were almost all well illustrated, they were gradually supplanted by a succession of newspaper strips.

The reprints must have been the policy of the publisher, for after Sullivan left the magazine he returned to the all-original comic book he had helped pioneer, and Big Shot -- with the single exception of Mart Bailey's spritely humor strip, "Brass Knuckles" -- never again published a new, original comic, concentrating wholly on retreads from the daily papers. Over the years, Big Shot spliced together such comics as Ham Fisher's "Joe Palooka"; 'Dixie Dugan" by Striebel and McEvoy (which had originated in a novel by J. P. McEvoy about -- to quote an overexcited "remainder" book dealer of the '40s who advertised in the pulps -- "the hottest little chorus girl who ever shook a scanty in a tired businessman's face."); the Frank Beck dog comic "Bo"; Lank Leonard's "Mickey Finn"; "Charlie Chan," a palid version of Earl Der Bigger's character, drawn by Alfred Andriola, now of "Kerry Drake"; "Cranberry Boggs" by Don Dean (whose work looked a lot like that of Bill Woggon, who was then recently late of "Big Chief Wahoo and Steve Roper"); Paine and Wexler's "Vic Jordan," a weak spy series; and a war comic, "Captain Yank" by Frank Tinsley, which seemed to be drawn by Tinsley about as often as not.

But you didn't buy Big Shot because of the second-line original comics or despite the rperint strips. You bought it because of "Sparky Watts" and "The Face" and "Skyman." They were reason enough.

Skyman, with his Wing (a flying wing which could be made to hover motionless in the air by "utilizing the mighty polar magnetic rays that sweep the continent from north to south"), Atomatic cannon, Statismatic paralysis pistol, and good right fist, had all the basic equipment for a first-class comic hero of the '40s. Yet I think the success that came to him and the success that eluded him flowed from another source. Skyman was a dandy. In another era and in another place, admiring the hang of a man's sleeve as much as the skill of his blade, he would have been eternally in debt to his tailor and bootmaker. Even his body, with its lithe, quick swordsman's legs, deep chest, and thickly muscled swordsman's arms and wrists, belonged to an earlier age of heroes. Skyman was a high-society Douglas Fairbanks, Senior, in a time of middle-class, gaudily clad Steve Reeveses.

In his real identity he was Allan Turner, blue-black wavy-haired millionaire inventor who, with his trimly bearded uncle, Peter Turner (a sophisticate himself unlike most comic book uncles -- and inventors -- and a man with an eye for a pretty girl), had developed the Wing and Atomatic and paralysis pistol. It was an era when the automobile was the status symbol, and Allan Turner never drove anything less than a Tucker.

In costume as the Skyman he wore gleaming knee-length boots, tight-fitting snow-white breeches that rose above the belt line in an inverted vee to the center of his chest, a red skin-tight shirt, and a blue cape and a goggled, dressed-up blue aviator's cap with white trim. His wide belt, the lanyard supporting the paralysis pistol, and the Statismatic itself, were the blue of his cape. On his chest, just above the point of the high-riding breeches, was the Skyman's symbol, a black three-bladed propellor, enclosed in a black circle against a field of yellow. The cuffs of his shirt, his belt buckle, and the shimmering Statismatic ray picked up the yellow from his chest.

He made quite a figure as he leaped from his red, white and blue Wing to do battle with America's enemies.

Rather too much of a figure, I think, for his own good. Bruce Wayne was a millionaire, to be sure, but he was certainly no dandy in his weird costume as the crime-fighting Batman. Clark Kent's features were regular, but his red and blue Superman costume seemed as serviceable as it was gaudy. Those fancy, pristine-white pants separated Skyman from the run of comic heroes, calling an attention to him he would not ordinarily have received and giving him a distinct identity of his own, but they had a show-offish quality, too, that failed to square with his own two-fisted directness, and they lent the impression he'd be careful stepping around mudpuddles -- probably the most damaging image a boy's hero could cast.

Skyman was just the natural Beau Brummel of the comic strip, and if he didn't run to fat and die broke, his taste in clothing kept him from the greater success a lot of his friends thought he should have had.

Not that Skyman wasn't a success. He was the first Big Shot hero to have his own comic book. And the last days of his career were his finest as he soared out beyond the confines of Earth to land upon the Moon, arouse the passions of a beautiful Martian girl, and, as America's National Hero, battle -- fantastically -- America's Greatest Enemy, still living, still hating, still plotting....

Although Ogden Whitney is often though of today as "The Skyman's" only artist, he was its second. Paul Reinman was the first and he continued to draw the strip until late in Big Shot's teens, establishing the central characters, Skyman's costume and weapons, and the patriotic storyline that endured until the very end. Nominally, the strip was by "Paul Dean" (and continued to be for a time after Whitney took over), and I imagine Reinman is not unhappy about it today. There was a great potential in "The Skyman" that his early art could not reach.

While Reinman was scratching away in Big Shot's sixteenth issue, however, the first issue of The Skyman was distributed, illustrated by Ogden Whitney, who had been drawing "Cotton Carver" over at DC for Adventure Comics. Soon Whitney was the regular Big Shot artist, too. Although vastly superior to Reinman, he was not the ideal artist for the Skyman of that time. Whitney was a realist, and the bold overstatement and near caricature the super-heroes demanded could only be sustained sporadically by his art. Well illustrated though it was, "The Skyman" lacked the fine vitality to put it into the very top rank of the drugstore classics of the early '40s. Like an actor too good for "B" pictures, and not quite strong enough for "A"s, Skyman struggled on for years, followed devoutly from one adventure to the next by fans who were always sure better days were coming. They finally came. And Skyman became a real actor then -- a major one -- no mere "personality" or performer. But, even as it is in the movies, the Skyman's darkest hours came before the days of his greatest triumph -- for in 1945 and with Whitney away in the Army and no longer even able to illustrate the strip as he had for a while as "Cpl. Ogden Whitney," a cartoonist named "Chollie Stern" became Skyman's mentor. It must have been a gloomy time for Allan Turner. It was for the rest of us.

Then, suddenly, the Great Producer made his decision, and in Technicolor. Whitney was back, better than ever. With pen and brush and ink he launched Skyman into his most remarkable adventure.

Always before, "The Skyman" was complete in each issue; now in its full maturity the strip became a cliff-hanger. Allan Turner, his scientific researches limited by the pressures of the war years, made rapid strides. The Wing, which had once travelled at an "unheard of --- 800 miles an hour!" when it was a two motor prop-driven job, became jet-propelled and even more incredibly swift. This, however, was merely a minor development, for late in 1946 young Turner, encouraged by his uncle Peter, developed an atomic rocket ship. As Skyman, he planned to voyage across space to the moon....

With Fawn Carroll -- his Lois Lane -- and two companions, he made the journey safely, only to crash at the last moment. Dazed, and in a state of amnesia, Skyman let himself be led possessively by an attractive, yellow-skinned, caucasian-featured girl to her dwelling in the labyrinths beneath the moon's surface. There, in one of the most marvelous scenes in comic books, he met -- Adolf Hitler.

"This may sound crazy, fella," says Skyman, shaking hands with a haggard, but wiry Hitler, "but I could almost swear that I've seen you somewhere before!"

And then the yarn took off. Cutting rapidly between Earth and the moon, complication piled upon complication. Whitney's great gift for the telling vignette, suppressed by the limitations of the complete-in-each-issue story, bloomed wonderfully, and the writing was "The Skyman's" best, certainly better than that of the sixteenth issue where Reinman's Skyman "mauls and batters his path to overwhelming success" like a "frenzied catamount" and explains "You know guns usually fire outward! This one fires IN! It sucks in oxygen in the air. Separates it from the nitrogen and argon that is also in the air and removes the oxygen!" in describing his method of extinguishing an oil field blaze.

Hitler had escaped to the moon from beleagured Germany at the end of the Second World War. There, his dreams of conquest had flamed anew, for, as he explained to the dazed Skyman, "There is a whole civilization here, underground -- which I intend to rule! They came from Mars to escape from a tyrannical king, but I will give them the benefit of my benevolent leadership!" With the few followers he was able to bring with him, Hitler, subverting the authority of the wise ruler who governed the Martians, planned revolution. Skyman, when he emerged from his amnesiac state, refused to go along with the plot -- although Hitler made it very clear that he was willing to overlook the past, that he could "use a man" of Skyman's talents. As clever as ever in turning misfortune to his advantage, Hitler then foisted off Skyman as well as Fawn Carroll and his other companions as "Enemies! The people who want to rule and suppress" the Martians.

Meanwhile, on Earth, Peter Turner, out of communication with Skyman for the three days following the wreck and despairing of his life, gave permission to the "United States Rocket Society" to fire an exploratory rocket containing an atomic warhead toward the moon. Almost immediately after the missile was launched, Skyman, his memory returned, managed to signal Earth with a radio salvaged from his spaceship, but while the dumbfounded Peter Turner listened, Hitler and his agents discovered Skyman and, before Peter could tell of the approaching atomic bomb, they destroyed the set. Simultaneously, the U.S. Army, through the capture of one of Hitler's former underlings, learned of the dictator's presence on the moon.

By this time, Skyman had been brought before the king to explain Hitler's charges. Just as he said, "I'm afraid our friend Hitler is given to lying now and then, Your Majesty. Our planet desires only peace! We wage no war except against ---!" the A-bomb thundered into the moon, creating "an explosion surpassing even Bikini." Turning the moment into a lunar Reichstag Fire, Hitler made his grab for power. But Skyman.... Oh it was quite a yarn. All twenty-seven chapters of it. Quite a yarn....

The Face was born as Tony Trent, a radio news commentator. He died in the midst of the war in Asia in World War II as a Chinese guerilla general, once a New York gangster known as Chinatown Charlie. But Tony Trent lived on, and quite successfully, too, occasionally reminiscing about the old days to the friends who had followed his adventures for so many years.

Mart Bailey -- who, like Whitney, had moved over from DC, where he'd been drawing a former Siegel and Shuster strip,

"Spy" -- was the illustrator of "The Face" and the writer too. His technical gifts as an artist were good. Although his figures were inclined to be a shade too stylized at times, he was one of the best comic artists of the '40s -- or any other decade. The style, uniquely his, was pleasing and forceful, and his comic book technique was excellent. But Bailey, though his work was always his own, had the same love of authenticity that marked Milton Caniff in his last years with "Terry and the Pirates" and in "Steve Canyon." And this love brought the level of his work for "The Face" to a peak that has never been reached in any other comic book strip. The characters, the settings, and the props seemed unmistakeably real. You knew real men and women were used as models, you knew the places and buildings and cities really existed, you knew the airplanes and tanks and rifles and revolvers were authentic. Even in the very early days of "The Face," before the strip became so completely committed to realism, there were always Bailey touches -- the detail of the collar of a woman's suit, the businessman's paunch almost hidden by a well-cut jacket -- that brought a greater credibility to his wondrous four-color, saddle-stitched world.

Mart Bailey, the comic book writer, was fully equal to Mart Bailey, the artist. Tony Trent and Babs Walsh, his fiancee, and General Lee-ahng, and all the other characters -- were performers who lived their lives by the month in two flat, limited dimensions -- revealed a remarkable depth and variety. The plotline developed the rhythms of complication and simplification that mark the work of a real storyteller. And instead of a shootout between words and pictures in a grimy sundown of balloons and india ink and confusion, as we often still have today, Bailey's words and Bailey's pictures worked together perfectly. In the movies, such a welding is said to be "cinematic"; we need that kind of word for the comics, too, and Mart Bailey's strip would be one of the first to receive it.

In the beginning, "The Face" was centered about New York. At that time, early in 1940, Walter Winchell's star was still rising -- in a matter of months he would be one of the most listened-to men in the country -- and radio commentators of every kind, from Jimmy Fidler to H. V. Kaltenborn and Edward R. Murrow were becoming well-known national figures. It's not surprising that Tony Trent was a news commentator, then, or that there was more than a touch of Winchell in his interest in crime and cafe society and the rest of the night world. Nor, considering the comic book trends of [illegible], is it surprising that Tony Trent became The Face.

"Tony Trent, radio commentator of Station WBSC," read an early splash panel legend, "owns a rubberoid mask with such a fiendish visage portrayed on it that, wearing it, he has become known as The Face! He uses the fear that this mask inspires to fight against the evil that besets the world!"

And so he did. Wearing the corpse-green mask with its blood-red lips, jagged teeth and fangs, pointed ears, high bulging cheekbones, black and cavernous eye sockets from which his eyes blazed burning white, and a short, rusty stubble of hair that met between the dark, scowling brows, the blond and handsome Trent looked like a combination of a spruce Mr. Hyde and a brutal Count Dracula -- and the effect was heightened by the double-breasted tuxedo he commonly wore while "in mask" and during his regular tour of duty as Trent in the city at night.

The Face frightened not only the criminals. He kind of got me, too. A year or so earlier, it had taken all the nerve I had to stay alone in the same room as the radio while the Shadow was giving out with that laugh he used to intimidate the crooks.-- "Hyah-hah-hah-hah hah-hah-ha! Who knows what evil lurrrks in the hearrts of men? The Shadow knows! -- and although The Face didn't affect me that badly, of course, it took a couple of issues before I could really think of him as a hero, instead of a villain, and look him square in those burning eyes.

I suspect that The Face's mask, like Skyman's snow-white breeches, was both a help and a hindrance. I wasn't the only kid on the block the Shadow had nearly scared out of his wits (in those pre-invisible days, the Shadow's laugh seemed even more terrible), nor the only one who had thought at first glance that The Face was a villain more ghastly than Dick Briefer's Frankenstein Monster in Prize Comics, who, after all, had a hero, Bulldog Denny, opposing him. It must certainly have had some effect on circulation, limiting sales because we didn't go in for horror much in those days (aside from the Universal movies, which look pretty tame up beside an average issue of an EC horror comic), and assuring them because it was a great gimmick, once you were familiar with it. And a lot of us became familiar with it: The Face had his own comic book in the early '40s, and if it hadn't been for the wartime paper shortage he'd probably have had it longer.

The New York crime adventures began to pall on The Face, however, and his interests -- like Winchell's -- became more international. As proAmerican as Winchell ever was, Tony Trent seems also to have been more moderate; he was certainly more of a man of action.

Before Pearl Harbor, between sorties against organized crime, The Face and Tony Trent fought and reported the schemes and aggressions of the dictators. After December 7th, 1941, Tony Trent became a full-time war correspondent, and if he was technically a non-combatant, The Face was not.

As Trent became more and more experienced in reporting the war, Bailey became more experienced in drawing it. "The Face" moved across the Pacific with the Infantry and the Air Corps and the Navy -- and the Infantry again. Trent reported the fighting with the Americans and with the Anzacs, too, and The Face got into it beside them. Babs Walsh, Tony's secretary back at WBSC joined the WACs and her assignment in the South Pacific brought them together once more. Steadily, the storyline gained form and maturity. The maturity called for a playing down of The Face and a spotlighting of Tony Trent. The plot made it fascinating.

After two years of fighting, Tony Trent was captured by the Japanese and the Face mask was lost. While Trent was being taken to a P.O.W. camp, Wild Bill Soggins, an American foreign correspondent, discovered the mask and used it to further his own harebrained ventures, only to find that The Face was still wanted for a murder the New York police -- mistakenly -- believed he had committed. And one of those policemen, an Army captain by then, was on the island to find him. As a P.O.W., Trent was tortured by members of a pro-war group intent on keeping Japan in the confliot, but General Yato, commander of the prison, a blood cousin of the Emperor and a recently converted Christian, whose life had once been saved by Trent, intervened in time to prevent his death and arranged for Tony's return home in an exchange of prisoners. Trent came back to the wars as a member of the Army, a tech sergeant, while the Face mask continued on its journey from hand to hand, and The Face himself was pursued as a murderer. Finally, while Tony Trent was in the camp of Lee-Ahng, a guerilla general, whom he had once known in New York as a criminal named Chinatown Charlie, the general was killed wearing the Face mask.

Realizing Lee-Ahng's own mysterious activities -- he had also maintained the identity of a Chinese general, Chin-ling -- could explain The Face's actions during the preceding five and half years and would end forever the threat of the false murder charge, Trent allowed The Face to die. And so, after seventy-four adventures, which had taken him from New York and its petty politics and crimes and cafe society highjinks to the other side of the world and to the harsh and massive politics and crimes and rude humor of war, he filed his last dispatch about his strange alter-ego. With the seventy-fifth story the strip became "Tony Trent," and The Face was gone forever.

Almost.

"Tony Trent" was no letdown. As if to make up for the loss of one alter-ego, Trent was given another, one almost as powerful: the commission he had applied for came through. Major Tony Trent and his friends, Captain W. J. "Sweet Willyum" Bailey of the Air Force; Liz Doyle, a comic strip Marguerite Higgins, who was in love with a Navy flier named Hellcat; Sergeant Yosoji, an American Japanese who helped Tony defeat an anti-liberal conspiracy in post-war Japan; a kind of Jimmy Fidler of international politics, Babbling Brooks, who maybe didn't quite make it under the "friend" category (among other things, he stole Tony's story of the death of The Face); and a dozen others, besides his fiancee, Babs Walsh, made up one of the best casts ever in any comic strip. There was even Jerry Ryan of the Army, whose sister Marion was due to marry a fellow named Mart Bailey on February 1st, 1947 -- or so the newspaper said that fell out of Jerry's pocket after he and Trent had prevented a mass assasination attempt against the Japanese government.

Finally, Tony Trent's overseas duty came to an end. He returned to the U.S., married Babs, and continued his adventures. In 1948 he got his own comic book, Tony Trent, but just as The Face had shared his comic book with Tony, so Tony shared his with The Face, recounting his own modern-day adventures and reminiscing about the old days as well.

Then, as the '50s began, Big Shot went under. Tony Trent and Mart Bailey left the comic world. I'd like to think not forever.

But as intriguing as the Skyman became and as fascinating as The Face always was, Sparky Watts is the fellow who drew the dimes from our pockets and sent us out of the drugstore door and down the sidewalk, squint-eyed with the sun and as sure-footed as blind men, wearing newsprint masks labeled Big Shot Comics as though we were born in them.

I admired Superman and Batman and the early Captain Marvel. Sparky Watts was my friend. He was not as close a friend as Mickey Mouse had once been, it's true, for when I was very small I believed in Mickey and real friends are always the best, but I thought a lot of him. (The older kids told me there was no Santa Claus. Happily, they never told me there was no Mickey Mouse. They didn't bring it up, I suppose, because who'd believe anybody'd believe Mickey Mouse was a real person, and I never discussed his reality any more than I discussed the reality of the Sun or Hershey Bars or Admiral Byrd or any other permanent fixture of the universe. I guess I grew out of Mickey about the time I grew into baseball.) Sparky liked the same things I liked, talked the way I talked, and had the same uncomplicated ideals I had; he lived in a middle-class neighborhood in a middle-sized town the way I did, wore the same kind of clothes I figured I'd wear when I was his age, and had a whole slough of girls just the way I wanted. Maybe it isn't surprising he was my friend. We had a lot in common.

In fact, he had a lot in common with almost every American boy turning adolescent. That was the secret of his success.

Mickey Mouse lived in a world that every child imagines all adults live in. Or, anyway, the world they imagine they will live in when they're adults. Mickey didn't have a job, although it never seemed that he didn't. He always had enough money but never quite more than enough. He had his own house and he was his own boss. He had a girl, and he was faithful to her 99.9 per cent of the time (the odd 0.1 per cent kept things from being too dull). Although he was a little shy and not completely at ease socially, when he had to attend a tea or a fancy dress ball or some such, he still managed to do all right for himself.

His only real enemy was Pegleg Pete,* a dangerous fellow -- but not too dangerous. And Mickey, of course, was a nice guy, just the way every normal kid says he's going to be when he grows up.

When you are very young it isn't hard to believe in that world (for me it was hard not to), but by the time you're off to kindergarten or maybe the first grade, you know adults have to have jobs, not everyone has enough money, even grownups are not always their own bosses, and men and women are not quite as faithful to each other as you once thought. You learn of cruelty and hatred and brutality. You learn of evil. Death is more than "going away." By five or six, Mickey's world is still a nice daydream; one, though, that no longer quite squares with the facts.

I don't know what was in Boody Rogers's mind when he sat down to invent Sparky Watts. However, when he got up from the job, he had invented the young adolescent boy's dream world, a world that fitted all the facts -- or all of them an adolescent boy cares about, anyhow.

Sparky had job, a lot of them. First he sold magazines, then he was a prize fighter, then he played professional baseball, and then he made five million dollars. So much for jobs. And money. And bosses. Like the teenagers who read his adventures, he was in love with a new girl just about every month, so he didn't worry much about being faithful, except right at the time. Sparky didn't like cruelty or brutality and he was strong enough to see that it didn't happen around him. He never hated anybody in his life. And if Sparky was no Clark Gable or Gary Cooper -- this was in the early '40s, remember -- well, all the rest of the guys in the strip were homelier than he was by quite a bit and all the girls thought he had more sex appeal than Gable and Cooper put together, which is what counted. He didn't handle teas and fancy dress parties and that sort of nonsense any better than Mickey Mouse, but what boy of any age did? Like Mickey, in the social clutch he managed to come through okay.

He had no Pegleg Pete to contend with, true enough, but then only the very young have villains they can see; Sparky's nemesis was more mature than Pete, and it was quite invisible. For unless Sparky was "recharged" periodically by Doc Static's Cosmic Ray Machine, he shrank in size down into the Unknown that surrounds us, prey to the voracious organisms of the microscopic world. Doc Static's machine gave Sparky super-human strength and five million dollars and made his life good; but it could take all that away and as much more besides if Sparky or Doc forgot -- as they did from time to time.

Sparky's hero was the human wisdom that produced the Cosmic Ray Machine; his villain, the human folly that failed to use it properly. Sparky took that knowledge with good humor, and when he couldn't manage good humor, he took it philosophically -- and that wasn't too hard to do, really, for the results of the folly were never disastrous, and it was actually rather difficult to fear an Unknown populated by such goofy-looking, odd-ball agents of evil as the micro-organisms who pursued him. Disney defeated evil by defeating Pegleg Pete, Rogers defeated it by exposing its absurdity. And, like Mickey, Sparky was a nice guy.

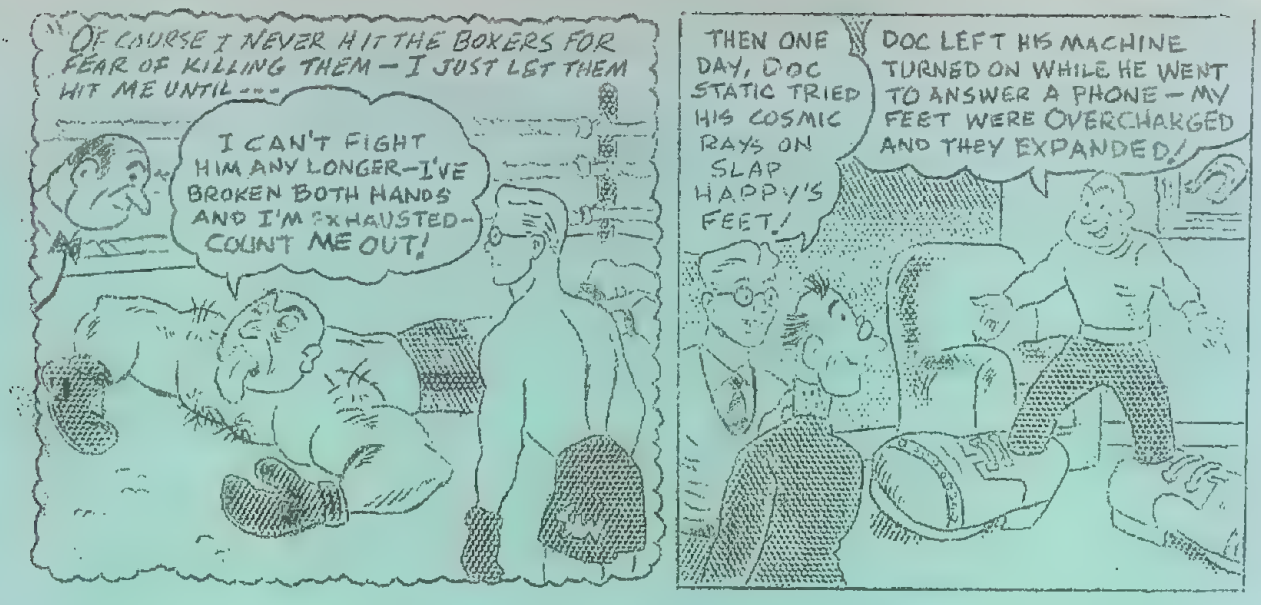
Maybe you wonder just how Sparky got to be the World's Strongest Funnyman. Samuel A. Beanpot, the well-known author (of such famous books as Little Acorns Are More Difficult to Find than Large Acorns and Peeping Through the Knot-Hole in Grandpa's Wooden Leg) and commentator once did, back in the seventh issue of Sparky Watts, and Sparky told him. Mr. Beanpot had been walking forth and back ("No! Forth and back is correct!" said Sparky's friend Slap Happy, "A guy has to walk forth before he walks back -- you can't walk back before you get anywhere...") and then Sparky came in and said that he would be glad to help him with his books...

---

* He later became "Black Pete" and grew a leg at the insistence of the pressure groups who have emptied the symbolism of children's literature in the name of "tolerance."

FINE! START RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING!
WELL, TO BEGIN WITH, I WAS BORN VERY YOUNG.. THEY SAY I LOOKED JUST LIKE MY DAD--ONLY I HAD MORE HAIR!
GOO! GOO!
"SOON I STARTED TO SCHOOL.. MY FIRST SWEETHEART WAS A GORGEOUS LITTLE BRUNETTE."
THANKS, OPAL, FOR CARRYING MY BOOKS!
YOU'RE WELCOME, SPARKY--I'LL CARRY THEM EVERY DAY, FOR YOU!
"EVENTUALLY, I GRADUATED FROM GRADE SCHOOL, ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL, AND MET A CUTE RED-HEAD."
THANKS, TABASCO, FOR CARRYING MY BOOKS!
YOU'RE WELCOME, SPARKY--I'LL CARRY THEM EVERY DAY FOR YOU!
"THEN LATER IN COLLEGE."
GEE, THANKS, PEGGY!
YOU WERE QUITE A LADY'S MAN, WEREN'T YOU
NOT EXACTLY, BUT I HAD TO HAVE SOMEONE TO CARRY MY BOOKS.. I WAS SO WEAK I COULDN'T LIFT 'EM!
CARRY MY OWN
AND GOT A
GOOD MORNING, SIR--I'M SELLING MAGAZINES!
IF YOU'LL SUBMIT TO AN EXPERIMENT, I'LL BUY ALL YOUR MAGAZINES!

I'M DOCTOR STATIC— INVENTOR OF A COSMIC RAY MACHINE THAT I BELIVE WILL MAKE A MAN STRONGER THAN AN ELEPHANT!
THE POOR OLD MAN IS CRAZY—BUT I'LL HUMOR HIM!
SURE— I'D LIKE TO BE STRONG!
I'VE HAD THE RAY ON YOU FOR ONE MINUTE — HOW DO YOU FEEL?
JUST THE SAME, SIR-- NO STRONGER, NO WEAKER!
I—I GUESS MY MACHINE IS A FAILURE—THANKS FOR LETTING ME TEST IT---- --SHAKE!
HOORAY! LOOK! IT WORKED!! WHEN YOU SHOOK MY HAND YOU BROKE ALL MY FINGERS! YIPEEE!!
SO THAT'S HOW YOU BECAME THE WORLD'S STRONGEST MAN! WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
TELL HIM ABOUT ME, SPARKY—I WANT TO GET WRITTEN ABOUT TOO!
"SURE! AFTER I WAS CHARGED WITH COSMIC RAYS I TRIED PRIZE FIGHTING — SLAP HAPPY WAS MY TRAINER."
WE'VE DONE ENOUGH RUNNING FOR ONE DAY— I'M WORN OUT BUMPING ALONG ON YOUR BACK!
I'LL SPRINT THE LAST HUNDRED MILES AND THEN I'LL SPAR SIXTY OR NINETY FAST ROUNDS!


OF COURSE I NEVER HIT THE BOXERS FOR FEAR OF KILLING THEM — I JUST LET THEM HIT ME UNTIL ---
I CAN'T FIGHT HIM ANY LONGER—I'VE BROKEN BOTH HANDS AND I'M EXHAUSTED—COUNT ME OUT!
THEN ONE DAY, DOC STATIC TRIED HIS COSMIC RAYS ON SLAP HAPPY'S FEET!
DOC LEFT HIS MACHINE TURNED ON WHILE HE WENT TO ANSWER A PHONE — MY FEET WERE OVERCHARGED AND THEY EXPANDED!

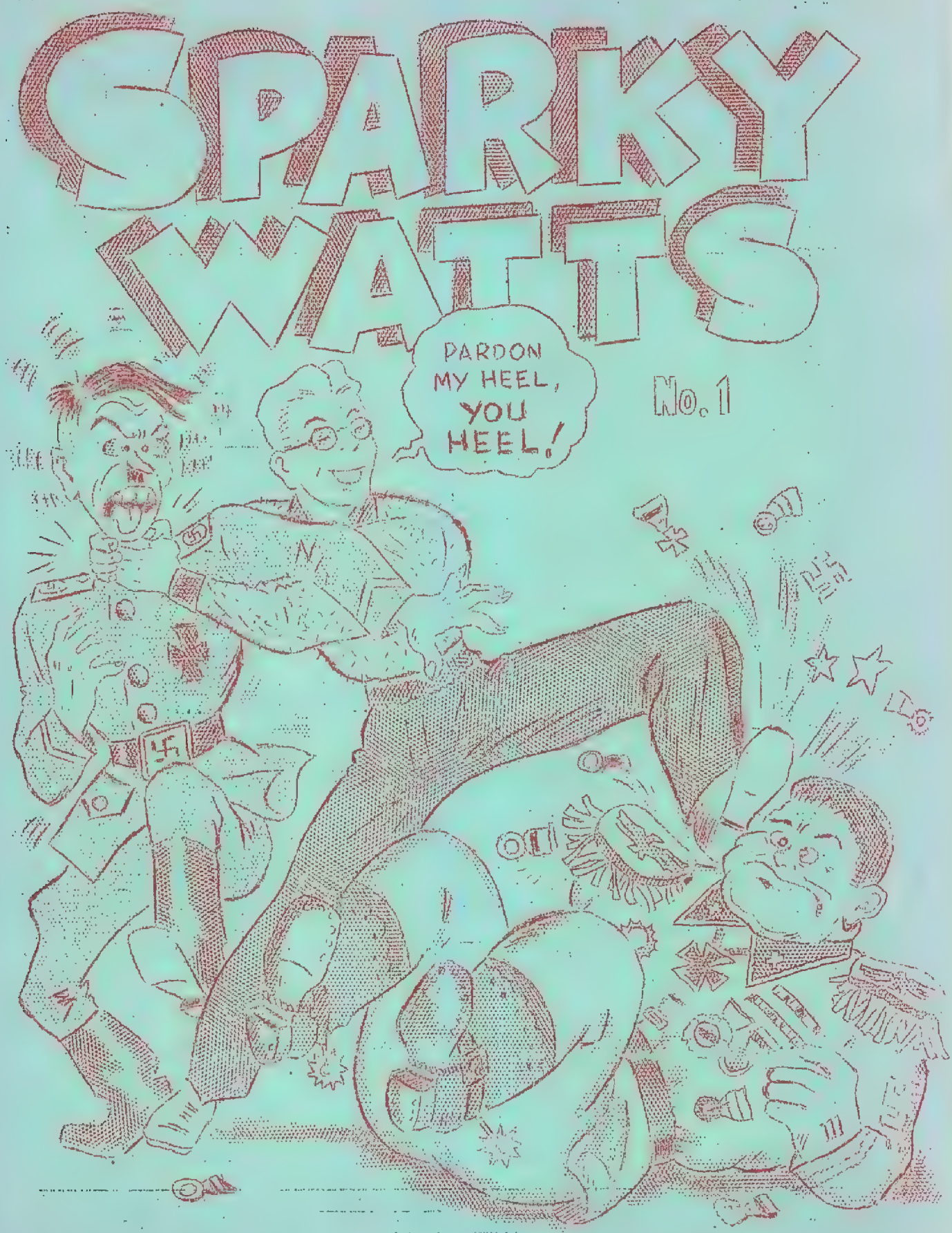
And so that's how Sparky became the World's Strongest Funnyman. If you want to find out more about his life, however, I don't think you'd better look around for the book Mr. Beanpot planned, even though he's had fourteen years to finish it. Goober, Sparky's playful pup dog, who had also gotten a charge from the Cosmic Ray Machine, buried Mr. Beanpot's car in a great big hole he dug in the street, and to the best of my knowledge the famous author never came back.

Anyway, the man who knew Sparky best -- aside from Doc and Slap Happy and his dozens of girl friends, of course -- was the man who wrote about him best. His articles are the ones the scholar will search out. As I've mentioned, his name was Boody Rogers, kind of an informal name for a biographer, and he was an artist as well as a writer. (And another DC alumnus to boot: he'd worked for Vincent Sullivan as far back as New Comics.)

(During the war years, while Rogers was away in the armed forces, a couple or three other men tried to fill in for him, but they seemed to kind of garble up the stories Sparky told them and their pictures are not accurate at all. The only one who signed his name was Tom DeAngelo, Big Shot's editor of the time; I hope it was only for penmanship practice.)

The early "Sparky Watts" yarns appear to have been originally drawn as newspaper strips, but maybe that's what Big Shot's publisher wanted us to think. If they were, and the syndicates turned Rogers down, a great and enduring daily comic was lost, one I'm sure would still be around today. Unlike most of the rest of us, Boody Rogers was ideally suited for the six day week. And if maybe Sparky's eye roved a little too much for a mixed newspaper audience -- he was even more fickle than fate -- that could have been taken care of without lousing anything up.

It's hard to give the flavor of those strips without actually reprinting them. The humor springs out of the story-and-pictures, not either alone. Then, too, just what would be a typical Sparky adventure? Sparky the prize fighter? Or Sparky the baseball player? Or Sparky-the-oil-pipeline-layer ("But Sparky, the line will be two thousand miles long -- it'd take you years -- and our Navy needs oil!" "How soon can you start the oil running?" "Just as soon as there are pipes to carry it..." "Fine! Give me a shovel, and an arm load of pipe, and five minutes head start. Then turn on your oil. I'll keep ahead of it!")? Or Sparky the guy who heiled Goering right in the snoot and kidnapped Adolf Hitler (it turned out to be a double of Hitler, though, and Sparky had to give up his plan to win the war that way, for as Winston Churchill told him: "No, Sparky, he has hundreds of doubles all over Nazi land -- you may never find the right man!")?


SPARKY WATTS
No. 1
PARDON MY HEEL, YOU HEEL!

Myself, I think the typicalest would be the adventure Sparky had in Sparky Watts # 2.* It kind of has a touch of everything.

The story begins with the arrival of a Chinese refugee boy, Yoo Hoo, who is all decked out in a jade green robe with overlapping sleeves, a pig tail, and one of those little round hats like a pill box with a button on top. He's big on Chinese proverbs. And a perceptive little tyke. When he sees Sue, Sparky's foster sister, gazing at Sparky though those long eyelashes of hers, he asks Doc Static with an almost inscrutable hiss: "Misser Doc, is Missy Sue Misser Sparkly's wife?"

Doc Static sets the theme of the story with his reply: "No, Yoo Hoo, and it's a dirty shame -- Sue worships Sparky! Sparky promised Sue's dying mother he'd marry her -- and he's willing to do it -- but Sue won't marry Sparky because she knows he doesn't love her!"

Sparky, in the meantime, is trying to think of some way to contribute to the war effort (he'd been turned down by the army for heart trouble; his heart beat so hard it knocked out the doctor who had been listening to his chest). In a moment of inspiration he decides to become a one-man anti-submarine flying patrol, and with a recharge from the Cosmic Ray Machine and a kiss on the cheek from Sue (Yoo Hoo comments: "An old Chinese proverb say...A girl's kiss is...aw, stewed rice! Me forget what it say!"), Sparky flaps his arms real fast and takes off.

Well, the first night out he doesn't have much luck because the submarines see him coming. So Sue creates him a costume out of an old pair of pajamas and a feather duster that makes him look like a gigantic polka-dotted chicken, a kind of Rhode Island Blue with pituitary trouble and measles. As he takes off for the coast he thinks, "This silly disguise wouldn't fool anyone -- a submarine crew will be suspicious and dive the moment they see me... But Sue made it and I don't want to hurt her feelings...."

A little while later Sue and Slap Happy and Yoo Hoo watch him fly back. His costume is in tatters. "Goodness, Sparky...what happened...did the sub crew machine-gun you?"

"Sub crew my eye! I flew too low over a bunch of duck hunters!"

Sparky and Sue finally decide his best bet is to wear a black suit, since most of his work will be at night; and Sparky (Rogers would never have had any trouble with the Comic Code Authority), who doesn't want to kill anyone even by sinking subs, solves his other big problem by watching Yoo Hoo play hide-and-seek. He blindfolds the periscopes with handkerchiefs until the U-boats can be captured. (Although he is forced to turn one torpedo on it its creator: "I hated to do that," says Sparky, as the submarine goes up in a terrific blast, "But if they can dish it out, they ought to be able to take it!")

All this time Sparky has been thinking about Sue and all the things she does for him...the way she mends his socks... Finally, he decides to have a talk with her that very night while they're out riding together.

"I just had to ask you tonight, Sue."

"Ask me what, Sparky?" Sue says, putting her arms around his neck.

---

* The first and second numbers of Sparky Watts seem to have been issued in reverse order. The events in Sparky Watts # 2 antedate his attempt to capture Hitler in Sparky Watts # 1. The publisher must have thought the cover picture showing Sparky giving Hitler and Goering the old what-for was the kind of box-office the new magazine needed. A new drawing -- in the style of Ogden Whitney, but unsigned -- was apparently substituted for Rogers' original first issue cover when Sparky Watts # 2 was finally published.

"Well, I've been noticing all the nice things you do for me. But I didn't fully realize how I've come to depend on you, and when I learned you've been washing my clothes, I decided to ask you to... to... to either let me pay you for doing it -- or I insist that you send my things to the laundry!"

Well, he finally does get up enough nerve to ask her, but on the morning of the wedding an S.O.S. comes over the short wave. Dressed in his wedding clothes, Sparky leaves immediately. Unfortunately, the ship has already gone down and Sparky is only able to capture the submarine (he accidentally rams his head through the side of the vessel and threatens to take it out and let them sink if they don't give up).

On the way back to his wedding, Sparky sights a life raft carrying two beautiful girls. He attempts to fly off with them, but his wing surface is just too small to left them both. Finally, he ties his feet to the mast and flaps along towing the raft. Soon, of course, the girls fall in love with him and get in a fight. The blonde is Fran Hotchkiss "of Park Avenue" and the brunette is "Eve, my maid," who doesn't think too much of Fran: "Why you stuffed snob! You think by snapping your fingers you can have any man -- well, this time I'm cuttin' in!"

Sparky tells them he is going to be married.

"What!" exclaims Fran, "You mean you intend to marry some person nobody ever heard of when you can marry me -- the glamorous Fran Hotchkiss!"

"Yep!"

"I'll buy you fine clothes, diamonds, yachts, penthouses, long automobiles -- I'll make you happy, all right!"

While Sparky is telling her that's she's whistling down the wrong rain barrel, a tremendous storm blows up and it takes Sparky all his strength to keep the girls from drowning. After hours at sea they are finally cast up on a dark tropical shore. In the morning the two girls join forces and, deciding a Sparky in the hand is worth two in the bush, "accidentally" lose his wrist compass. Afraid to leave the island for fear he'll never be able to find it again, Sparky spends three dreadful weeks ing waited on hand and foot by two beautiful women who are madly in love with him.

Then one night, while they are gathered about the fire, they hear mumble-mumble boom-boom-boom yeoowww from the jungle. "It sounds like human voices!" "I hear drums -- Oh -- It's cannibals!"

Well, when Sparky investigates, it turns out to be the junk-box in a hamburger stand. They've been living on a Florida beach for three weeks.

Back in his home town of Appledale, New York, Sparky discovers that Fran Hotchkiss' father has just taken Sue off to New York City. It seems Fran recognized the Florida shorline days before and telegraphed him to tell Sue that Sparky was dead and to offer he a job away from Appledale. Sparky flies to New York, and by removing his glasses so his X-ray vision will work, he finally manages to track Sue down by going through the city block by block. However, by the time he gets up to the office suite, Sue has left and Mr. Hotchkiss tells Sparky she's agreed to marry him in her effort to forget Sparky.

"I won't live forever," says Hotchkiss. "You can marry Fran, my daughter! She's infatuated with you -- then when I die, divorce Fran and marry Sue! Isn't that simple?"

"What! Why you old reprobate! I'd be marrying my mother-in-law!"

But Sue leaves Mr. Hotchkiss on the church steps and returns to Appledale. There, Sparky greets her as the train pulls in (he'd just run up from New York).

"Sparky... Sparky... dearest I thought you were dead!"

"Don't worry, honey," says Sparky, "I'm not letting you out of my arms until we're married!" And the caption under the last panel tells us that Sparky appears each month in Big Shot Comics, which indeed he did.

Sparky never did marry Sue, however, although she hung around the house for another eight years or so. I don't know why. He was the soul of honor with other things, but with girls....

After the war, Rogers returned to "Sparky Watts" in Big Shot and Sparky's own magazine (which had been wisely suspended during Rogers' absence). The cartoons were better than ever -- they were gorgeous, wonderful things -- but the stories were seldom serialized as they had once been and I think they lost a little something because of that, for Rogers' real talent as a writer lay in long, loose, episodic storylines. He could do wonders with that format. The little short stories were not quite his meat, no matter how charming and nutty they sometimes were. Sparky was still brilliant at times -- and when he was, few comics have ever been better -- but the moments grew further and further apart. Toward the end, at the last of the '40s, Rogers seems to have employed some assistants who did not quite understand Sparky and who more or less got the facts of his life all unwound, or maybe Sparky, always a modest sort of fellow, got tired of public life and just kidded them along a bit.

After all, all that strenuous work -- several pages a month, right at once, year in and year out -- will get a guy, Cosmic Rays or no. I've always thought that if he could have done, or, say three or four panels a day for some big newspaper, he'd still be out there running faster, jumping farther, diving deeper, and coming up drier than anyone on earth.

You know, I still think maybe he could. Sparky Watts, like Mickey Mouse, is ageless....

So long, Sparky and Skyman and The Face and Vincent Sullivan. I saw you in the funny papers.

--Richard Kyle

NOTE: I'd like to thank Jerry Bails, Juanita Coulson, Ron Goulart, Dick Lupoff, Bill Thailing, and Silme for their assistance with magazines and facts and information. And the Columbia Comic Corporation for supplying the source material.

-- rk

Frederic Thompson and Elmer S. Dundy opened the Hippodrome with the help of an able range of the day's talent. A Yankee Circus on Mars was written by George Vere Hobart, a popular playwright remembered chiefly now for his highly successful comedy, Mrs. Black is Back. The star was Bessie McCoy, the director Edward P. Temple. The then-well-known Spanish pantomimist, Marcelline the Droll, clowned during intermissions. A Yankee Circus was the first part of a three-feature program that also included a 150-girl ballet, The Dance of the Hours, excerpted from La Gioconda ("...there was a ballet that for brilliance of costuming and grace of execution overshadows anything yet seen in New York," said the New York Times, and the quote is a typical one). A Civil War melodrama called The Raiders finished the show, after which, quoting again from the Times, "....the audience drew the limit at shrieks only by exerting an abnormal effort at self-control."

Off with a bang, indeed...but it was only the curtain-raiser.

The Hippodrome followed some interesting leads with its elegant fancies. The first important musical production in America, The Black Crook (1866), was a sprawling wonder based loosely on the Faust theme. For its time, it was a shocker: a hellish Hades, an opulent Heaven, and a thunderstorm in the Hartz Mountains, were scenes window-dressed (or under-dressed) by thousands of daringly clad ballerinas who raised maiden-aunt eyebrows throughout New York.

The Black Crook's plot was incoherent and senseless, but the musical extravaganza developed in stature over the following years. In 1903, L. Frank Baum adapted The Wizard of Oz for the stage. With the comedy team of Fred Stone and David Montgomery as the Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman respectively, it hit such boxoffice heights that Glen MacDonaugh -- collaborating with Victor Herbert -- brought out a stupendous imitation: Babes in Toyland.

In 1905, the mighty Hippodrome opened. Under the post-Thompson-Dundy guidance of the Shuberts, the prolific author-producer-director R. H. Burnside became a dominant figure in the Hipp's fortunes. He was an excellent hand at melodrama, and a man whose imagination and skill were ideally tailored for the Hipp's stage resources. For Battle in the Skies, he conceived a visionary New York street of 1950, with monorails, moving sidewalks, robot street musicians, a museum in which is exhibited the last living horse, rooftop airstrips, a newscaster with a megaphone delivering the latest war news hot off the wireless, and pedestrians reading newspapers by the light of small lamps in their hats. Three spies hold a confab here; hero-inventor Geoffrey Gedison turns his radium pistol on one of them; the unfortunate mercenary vanishes in a sheet of flame.

And then R. H. Burnside wrote Inside the Earth, an elaborate Merritt-Burroughs kind of foray with a New Zealand background. While searching the jungles for his missing wife, Rose, mining engineer Dave Allen finds the man with whom she had suspiciously disappeared a month before. Known as Black Dan (no villain, despite the name), he delivers a line that deserves some sort of enshrinement: "I know where your wife is. She is at the center of the earth!" Dan then tells his story.

What had happened to Rose Allen? She had been kidnapped, swears Black Dan, by a party of dwarfs who took her to a cave in the Sacred Mountain (seen in the background throughout Act I). Dan had followed, had fallen into a chasm, had seen such wonders as a city of silver, and had learned that Rose would be sacrificed to the Sun God depending upon her decision as to marrying the subterranean society's king. Dan had then managed to find his way back.

Dave, Black Dan, a band of Maori natives, and Dave's crew of miners, investigate the Sacred Mountain; and half-credence turns to conviction when Dan captures an evil-looking dwarf. They question him about Rose:

"It means death for me if I tell you!"

"It means death for you if you don't," answers Dave Allen, and at gunpoint the dwarf takes them into the cave. What awaits the gallant band is a lake, with a waterfall pouring into it, an island at its center. In the cataract appear girls -- young girls -- the captive souls of sacrificed maidens. Could Rose...?

But without warning, masses of dwarfs pour from every corner of the cavern. The fight rages...until, with a shriek, Rose Allen runs onstage. A flock of knife-wielding high priests are after her. The heroes rush to her rescue, but the priests catch her, drag her through the lake to the island. Dave jumps in, Dan with him...but the priests reach the atoll first. They pull Rose onto it...and the island sinks, quickly and quietly, into the crystal deeps. Thanks to the Hippodrome's disappearing tank (about which, more later) Rose and the high priests are not seen again until the end of the play.

Outnumbered by the dwarfs, the rescue party is captured. But Dave Allen staves off certain death by explaining that he and his men live on the earth's surface, directly beneath the Sun God; they are the Sun God's children. The dwarfs -- slaves of the Inca descendents who rule the subterranean civilization -- take Allen's crew to their lords.

The king lives in a fabulous palace at the center of the earth. A sunken pool shimmers in the palace floor. When apprised of events, he sends two couriers to bring Rose Allen. The messengers dive into the pool; and out of it, then, bobs a large boat with the couriers, Rose, and the high priests on board.

Seeing Dave, Rose rushes to him for an affectionate reunion that baffles the king. Realizing that the Sun God's children are a race apart, the leader concurs when Dave firmly asserts: "Your bride she can never be, for she is mine alone."

And then they wrote Neptune's Daughter, in which a rotund, bearded King Neptune sailed onstage on an ornate raft drawn by mermaids. It was this show in which a squad of chorus girls marched en masse down a baroque stairway and vanished into the stage tank (or rather, swam backstage underwater and emerged out of sight of the audience -- simple, but remarkably effective). The last show to use the tank was Good Times, in 1921. The theatre's decline had set in by then, and it kept declining until Jumbo ended its long career in 1935.

NOTES ON SOURCES: Original period sources are the best for amusement park lore. These included the follow articles and guidebooks: The Human Need for Coney Island by Richard LeGalliene, July 1905 Cosmopolitan; The New Coney Island by A.B.Paine, August 1904 Century Magazine; Nelson's Views of Coney Island, 1906-7. Staley's Views of Coney Island, 1908; Burroughs' History of Coney Island, 1904. Theatrical papers and magazines like The New York Clipper and The Theatre were consulted in researching The Greatest Shows Unearthly.

As for books, none of the three mentioned here are too detailed on the sort of rides and shows dealt with in Greatest Shows, but they helped nonetheless: Good Old Coney Island by Edo McCullough; Sodom by the Sea by Oliver Pilate and Jo Ranson; The Outdoor Amusement Industry by W. F. Mangels.

L. & N. SHAW

(1235 Oak Avenue, Evanston, Illinois)

Skimming through the latest Xero, I chanced upon Fred Pohl's remark re: A CASE OF CONSCIENCE that "it went through three editors before IF had the wit to buy it." In the interest of Truth, I hereby point out that my husband, your friend and fandom's Grand Old Man was editor of IF at that time and that it was he, Larry T. Shaw, in person, who "had the wit to buy it." Not without, I might add, some objections by his boss James Quinn, who never did figure out what the story was about. It was not some faceless crew at IF at all.

-- Noreen

Lin Carter should get his chronology straight. AJ Budrys did not buy SOME WILL NOT DIE from Algis Budrys; Harlan Ellison did.

PS: Up till now I thought only H. L. Gold and Lester del Rey had seen A CASE OF SONSCIENCE before me (and that Lester had the wit to want it after all... but I had it by then). I wonder who the third editor was.

-- Larry

JOHN BAXTER

(Box 39, King St PO, Sydney, NSW, Aus.)

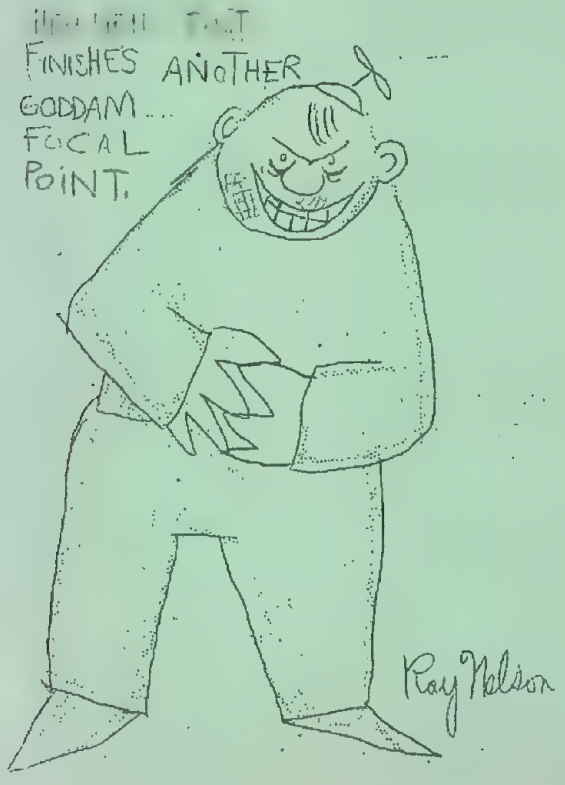
Sorry to be so late with my comments on Xero this time around. Perhaps I'm too late - maybe Xero 10, with the puce, cerise and chartreuse cover is already mailed out, and due to my delinquency, I am not one of the recipients. Tsk.

// No, that was Xero 9½ with the puce, cerise and chartreuse cover. Xero 10, as you have surely noted, has a quiet tan cover with brown ink. -PL//

Having thus put you in a good mood, let's move on to Xero 9. Interesting cover, as usual, though I think it is a trifle inferior to that on No. 8. Perhaps the choice of color had something to do with it. Bhob's previous effort was visually surprising in two

ways: the stripes of green and yellow gave one the horrible illusion of having one's eyes torn out by the roots, and the actual choice of colour was also designed to give the maximum possible contrast. The cover on 9 certainly has the brilliant color, but the design is quite mundane when compared with the previous one. //That's odd -- both Dick and I thought that the cover bhob did for Xero 8 was a fascinating experiment that was only semi-successful, while Xero 9 was a complete enchantment (its cover, that is). Perhaps the paper made a difference; about 100 copies of bhob's Xero 9 cover were printed on scarlet da-glo, and it was pretty much a matter of random choice (plus some fast grabs) who got those hundred. Do you recall what color paper you got? -PL//

I'm sorry I can't share your enthusiasm for the Burroughs revival. When you were reading THUVIA, MAID OF MARS, I was in the middle of TREASURE ISLAND; and when you moved on to JOHN CARTER, WARLORD OF MARS, I progressed to THE WRECKER and DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, so a whole world of fantasy was lost to me. I went back to some Burroughs books a few months ago and tried to read them, but it was hard work. I guess you have to read Burroughs when you're young and re-read him wreathed in clouds of notalgia. Those US prices for the British Burroughs pbs are criminal. Even out here in Australia, the price is only 3d. or 6d. above the British list price. By the way, I think you may be in error on a couple of counts in this piece about the British books. Pinnacle books folded some time ago, and I have not heard anything about their being revived recently. About eight or ten years ago, they launched a patchy sf/fy series of pbs, all of them cheaply produced and not terribly good buys even at the surprisingly low prices. They did de Camp's ROGUE QUEEN, CARSON OF VENUS and a string of Barsoom and Tarzan stories, amounting to, I think, twelve or fourteen titles. After that, they folded and nothing was heard of them again. I'm inclined to suspect that the Pinnacle Books pbs you picked up in New York were old stock, remaindered from England. The Four Square Books are certainly new, but I don't think there are "dozens of Burroughs books" in the series. At last count I found 13 titles, the latest being CHESSMEN OF MARS, released the month before last. //(September, 1962.) -PL// Of course, there may be others, but I doubt the series will extend beyond the more popular Tarzan novels and the Barsoom stories. Incidentally, Mortelmans isn't doing all the covers for the Four Square Burroughs -- the current ones are done by Roy Temker... Tumker...something like that. I can't make out the signature very well. The illustrations are slightly inferior to those of Mortelmans, but they still stack up very well against some of the horrors I've seen on American pb covers recently. //Hmm. As of this month -- April, 1963 -- we have 23 Four Square ERBs: Barsoom through CHESSMEN plus 17 Tarzans, which is most of them. That other artist looks like Roy Garnon to me.



//But considering the big breaks in Burroughs news on the US market (plus Dick's professional involvement with Canaveral Press), US editions are of top current interest. And, of course, we are now all Good Hardcover buyers. Right? -PL//

KREEGH KILL was pretty wet. I'm ashamed to say I like Auden, Eliot and Dylan Thomas, so my critical standards for poetry come pretty high. GREATEST SHOWS UNEARTHLY also failed to turn me on, but then unfortunately I'm not prey to nostalgia as you people are. The production of this article was excellent, though - I admired that at least.

KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY PATOIS - ah yes, marvellous, marvellous. I don't know what it is about Lin Carter's work that I like, but he never fails to amuse me, or inform me, or just plain entertain. Of course, I really shouldn't approve of an item like PATOIS, being a keen James Bond fan and commentator on the works of Ian Fleming. But this was certainly a clever send-up. One thing though - I'm surprised Lin didn't squeeze in a little sadism. There has never been a Bond book that didn't have somebody tortured to death, or almost to death anyway. In most cases, it's Bond who gets the kicks. In that masterly examination of the American Way of Life, DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER, Bond is kidnapped by one of the many enormous criminal gangs that infest American cities, taken out into the desert by private steam locomotive (all the best crooks have these, of course) and left to the tender mercies of the hood's henchman, who put on football boots and tromp all over our hero. Very uncomfortable, but perhaps not quite as bad as being beaten about the genitals with a cane carpet beater (CASINO ROYALE), half torn apart in a runaway massage chair (THUNDERBALL), dragged naked across a coral reef and fed to the barracuda (LIVE AND LET DIE) or shoved into a heated metal tube full of spiders (DOCTOR NO). But then, it's all part of "the Business".

Bob Tucker's demolition of OTHER SIDE OF THE UNIVERSE was entertaining, though more as comedy than criticism. I agree with him about the complete hideousness of the simple uncomplicated rural way of life that most amateur Utopians visualise for themselves. As Jim Blish said about Ted Sturgeon's Utopias, "they are so tree-housey, bare-foot, folk-dancy and whole-wheat-bready that they would qualify as the tenth circle of hell as far as I'm concerned."

THE MAKING OF A FANTASTIC PAPERBACK was excellently written and presented - honestly now, don't you think there is something in this article that wasn't found in that H. P. Norton horror in Xero 8? Style, maybe? Grace, charm, evidence of thought and skill? I think Charles Collins is the sort of person whom it would be very pleasant to meet.

CAPTAIN BILLY'S WHIZ GANG - errrr, well, I hesitate to admit this, but I actually read AICFAD this time, and quelle horreurs, enjoyed it! Do you think that maybe I'm becoming...gulp...addicted to comics? //Worse -- you're becoming addicted to articles about comics. Hand-me-down nostalgia is the worst kind! -PL//

The more letters I read from Fred Pohl, the more irritated I get with the man and his magazine. Both the letters and the magazine seem to rely on a modified version of the Big Lie technique; i.e., if you say something often enough, loud enough and publicly enough, everybody who hears it will start to believe it is the truth. Lately, in various fanzines, I've heard Pohl claim that editors aren't supposed to teach writers their business, that good science fiction always sells, that GALAXY Is Better Than Ever, that, in general, everybody is wrong except Fred Pohl. The terrible part of this campaign is that there is no way of fighting the man. Like all editors, he controls his readership almost absolutely. He refuses to hold himself responsible to his readers for editorial policy, and so you just have to sit back and bear it, or at the very most exercise your rather futile right of not buying his magazine.

Almost every phrase in Pohl's letter is a distortion of some kind. "Good sf always sells" - what is Pohl's definition of "good"? If GALAXY is any indication, it means anything that resembles what this magazine has been printing for the last three or four years. Does the fact that a story is not written in the GALAXY

style make it "bad"? Apparently Pohl thinks so. To claim that all the "good" sf is being published is nonsense. Brian Aldiss wrote a rather avant-garde novel called A GARDEN WITH FIGURES and submitted it to three publishers. All turned it down. John Phillifent, a British pro, wrote a short novel and sent it to ANALOG. Campbell refused to buy it unless a psi gimmick was written in. Lee Harding, another local writer like myself who sells to the British magazines, wrote a fine short novel that examined the mentality of After the Bomb survivors. Ted Carnell of NEW WORLDS turned it down - not because it was poorly written (Lee had made nine consecutive sales immediately before this one) but because the ending was not "upbeat", i.e., happy.

These are just cases from my own personal experience. You only have to look at the field to realize that there must be many others. If all "good" sf is published, why is Jim Blish selling historical novels to Faber and Faber, the British publishers? Why is Ted Sturgeon doing movie script "novelisations"? As for the marvellous stuff that Pohl is allegedly publishing in his magazines, the Bradbury yarn he mentions is a poor rewrite of an old tv script I saw on ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS last year, the Vance novel is a short story blown up big with some of the most inept padding I've ever seen in sf, and the Heinlein is either a desperation job or a yarn written as a favor to Pohl.

/Well, as regards the reader's "rather futile right of not buying", it strikes me as not so futile at all. In as highly competitive a business as publishing, that product which captures and retains the favor of the buying public survives. The rest disappear. And ever since a change in US law required magazines to reveal their circulation each year, the two leaders, <u>every year</u> have been Campbell's castigated Astounding/Analog, and Gold/Pohl's much criticized Galaxy.

/As to why James Blish is <u>writing</u> historicals, he has stated clearly that he is attempting to broaden his horizons as a writer, just as many specialist readers (sf fans included) might do well to broaden their horizons as readers. As to why he sold one historical to Faber rather than any US publisher, I think that is another problem, not particularly relevent to science fiction.

/Finally, as to why Sturgeon novelized "Voyage to the Bottom" or whatever that thing was a while back, I suspect that (a) it was a quick and easy buck, which it is no shame to make, and (b) it looked, at the time, like an interesting experiment. That it did not work very well is, as Sturgeon himself has said "a simple case of the working of Sturgeon's law". -PL/

HARRY WARNER

(423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland)

Who says that fans can't adapt? Not too long ago I would have broken into a cold sweat at the receipt of a 100-page fanzine, doubting the evidence of my eyes and fearing that I'd never find time to read it. But I've been conditioned quickly by such experiences as Bill Donahp's creations and the 100th FAPA mailing and I accept this latest issue of Xero as one of the

more normal manifestations of nature, whizzing right through the pleasant job of reading and commenting on it within a week of receipt. /...and having your letter selected and published within a year of its receipt! -PL/

More power to you if you can get enthusiastic about Burroughs. I missed him in youth, too, not because I felt myself superior to the writer but because I didn't have enough money to buy his books, none of the kids in my neighborhood owned any of the Burroughs volumes, and the local public library did not permit anyone under senior high school age to enter, much less borrow from, its adult department. When I finally got access to his works, long after I'd been collecting stf in general, I found myself unable to stomach his butchery of the English language. I suppose that it's possible to reactivate one's sense of wonder and fall under the sway of the adventure that ERB dreamed up, but I can't concentrate on that procedure, because of the ravages that his syntax commit on my sense of good writing style.

THE GREATEST SHOWS UNEARTHLY was intensely interesting. I suspect that amusement parks area mong the very few subjects that have never formed the subject of a book, and I suspect that an interesting volume could be written in the style of this item. The great parks of the era described here seem to derive much of their spectacle from the great operatic houses of Italy, which could bring off effects that no theatre could hope to duplicate with the machinery in use during the past couple of centuries. The closest that I came to one of these marvels was when I visited as a boy Pen Mar Park about 15 miles northeast of Hagerstown, in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and it undoubtedly contained just the scraps and leftovers from the former glories of such as Luna Park. Anyway, this is proof that Disneyland is just the modern descendent of fabulous ancestors, rather than the demonstration of Disney's creative genius that it's frequently considered to be.

Tolkien's debt to Wagner and Wagner's sources was something that seemed obvious to me as soon as I started to read about the Tolkien books, and I had wondered why it was so long until someone wrote an article on the topic. Like you two, I've not read the books that everyone else has read, but from the reactions they have produced, I gather that they do not equal Wagner in one important way: the treatment of evil. Everyone seems to shudder and quake at Mordor so severely that it wasn't even possible to use the name as a convenient joke for plugging a convention bid. In Wagner, the evil is evil but it is understandable and you realize that these evil persons suffer perhaps as severely as the heroes and heroines and that you possess within yourself at least trace quantities of the worst qualities of Alberich and Hagen and the dragon. One correction : I don't think that there is any spot in Wagner that corresponds to the D element which Lin calls common to Wagner and Tolkien. I can't find any mention of the "armored parts" that he mentions. Siegfried simply listens to Mime tell about Fafner's size and bone-crushing tactics and poison-spitting bad habits, then asks if the beast has a heart, is answered in the affirmative, and is immediately satisfied that he can kill the beast.

I don't like the thought of paying 50 cents for paperback books, either, which is the main reason that I usually purchase them in second-hand shape unless a publisher is doing something so noble that I want to lend it financial support. But please notice how much paper you get for a given sum today and compare it with the amount of paper acquired for the same sum a few years back...whether it's bathroom stationery, loose-leaf filler, or whatever. Paper costs have climbed dreadfully, along with most other supplies required in publishing.

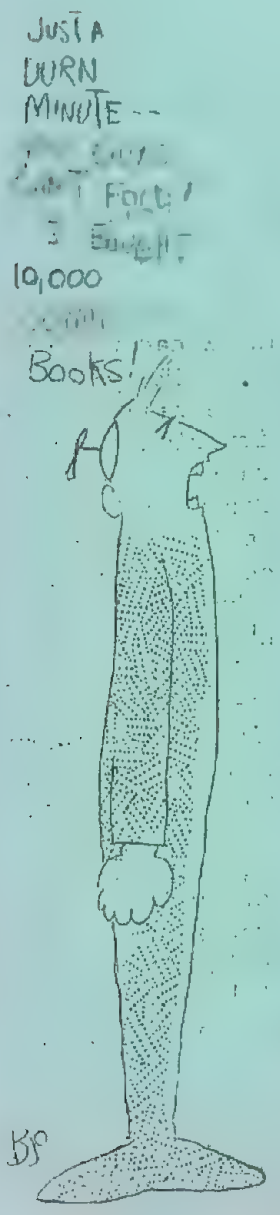
Suddenly I've decided that I don't want to be an anthologist, after all. It sounds as if Charles M. Collins will get paid at the rate of about one cent per hour instead of one cent per word, by the time this volume is released. The thought of retyping the entire contents is particularly numbing. I always thought that the procedure was to tear up coldbloodedly a couple of copies of the books or magazines in which the items originally appeared and let the linotypers work from that.

//One more peril of anthologizing (although it applies to authoring as well)... Charlie's book was postponed by Avon from their November release date to January, and then to May, which we shall see about shortly. -PL//

Good science fiction always sells? I can think of two types of exceptions to Fred's statement. The first group would consist of the dew Adams in science fiction's history: good stories that did not sell in the usual sense, but were put into print after the writer's death because of the affection of friends or the interest that the demise had stirred up among readers. The obvious point here is that it's not likely that any writer will produce more than one good science fiction story in this category, and will turn to other types of fection when he finds that he must depend on possible posthumous recognition for the stories in which he does not remember current markets. The other group would consist of some novels that I've not read but have heard about. There are supposed to be a couple of Campbell novels in the style of The Mightiest Machine that never saw print, because by the time he was in a position to publish his own work, he'd decided that science fiction magazines should publish a different type of story. Dr. David Keller has a whole stack of unpublished fiction, which a correspondent of the old fellow claims are finer than most of his published work.

RICK SNEARY

(2962 Santa Ana Street, South Gate, California)



You have chopped the tail off one of my favorite lines. In the past when I have been tearfully explaining to some fan editor why his pride and joy has been languishing around my place for months without a word of faint praise, I've told of all the fanzines I do get.. How they go into a box, with the ones I feal are most importen (to me) in front.. But there are always more in the box than I can answer.. The more I answer the more fanzine and more titles there are.... And then I whine that as bad as it is, "I still don't get Cry, Yandro, Kipple or letalone Xero." Now I have Xero---anf for some time, so I will try write a few words of thanks.. Had you sent me a copy in May, I would be just getting around to writing you about that too, so you see you lucky we both are. //Which May? -PL// You didn't send me a copy untell I had time to do something about it..

The main reasons I haven't tried to see Xero before is that I don't care much for 100 page fanzines.. ---What can you say in a hundred page fanzine you can't in three, thirty-four page fanzines?--- The other thing is your coverage of comic books.. I find the subject mildly interesting, but not especially.. I'm not against, but when time is limited I'd rather spend it atleast trying for the things I am interested in. (Finding something of real value in any fanzine is like trying to find the good stories in old Amazings, but more fun.) I'm not out to knock any mans fancy, but I've got enough fades of my own... What you publish in the future is your business, ofcourse, but I would like to vote for a smaller fanzine.. //You make it unanimous, Rick. -PL//

I never read Burroughs when I was a teenager eather... Or, sence. My childhood is remarkably unlike most fans in that I was not a big time book reader.. Not going to school or public library had a lot to do with it I guess, but I never read most of the books that were available... I was a big

radio listener though... Jim Harmon and Redd Boggs were out to my place about three months ago and we spent a couple jolly hours talking about Capt. Rosco Turner, Little Orphan Anne (Have you ever heard Dave Kyle sing her theme song--- all the way through?), Jack Armstrong, and all the other shows dear to the heart of us old men... ---- I have some ERB, and I'm going to read them--real soon now, too. --- Your comment on the volume of comment on Mrs. Camper and her Electric Cosmopolitan seems well put. I can't see how my enjoyment of fandom will be greatly effected---and surely not hurt, by such an article, no matter how badly.. I would rather not see the article writen, because I don't think it is going to explain Fandom to anyone.. Fans can't even explain it to each other.. They certainly can't explain why they get so excited about things of so little importance as they do. The years even of bad blood letting has been a sad example. Most of it resulting from some one being thin skined to the barbed remarks of persons whose opinions shouldn't really matter... And, the goulish interest of others... My own opinion is the only way to fight such nastyness is not to answer it, or even egnor it.. But to devote ones time to that part of fanac, and those fans, that continue to exhibit enjoyment and good will.. The vast majority of fan material is of this nature--for an example, Xero---all one has to do is go where the fun is... You only have to face realities in a real world----as they might say in Coventry.

The Greatest Show Un-Earth, is a fine example of why I didn't want to read Xero, It's much like the old farmer of years ago when transportation of fresh fruits and etc's was expensive.. He was asked to try a cantalope, and he said; "Nope! There are to many things I like now that I can't afford." -- Reading this filled me not only with interest, but questions.. I longed for more detail on how the rides opperated, and about the apparent dangers of fire.. -- There isn't anything I can say about the article though. It would seem to me that a book might be written on the subject though, with just a little more digging into files and records,,,

I think the thing that pleased me the most about the issue was seeing all the material by Lin Carter.. I guess he has been writing for you before, but there hasn't been much from him in the fanzines I do read.. Except for an ocational mention of the name I haven't heard much of him in ten years....Yet I note there is a rather thick folder with his name on it in my correspondence file.. Lin and I were at the peaks of activity at about the same time...And it has been years since I read a really good fannish take-off on the hard-boiled mystery... It takes a Fifth Fandom to really write this sort of stuff.. --- Maybe some day I'll write a Old Sage Saga, and mention Carters name, too.. I like him too.

I'm sorry I missed his two earlyer articles on Tolkien.. I'm rather left speechless by the degree of resurch that has gone into this. It isn't really..... well, I don't have the type of memory that makes this kind of resurch possable.. Also I don't notice details. I read for enjoyment, and without a lot of background knowledge I'm lost.. I didn't join the Fellowship of the Ring--even though I'll rave about the series as much as the next fan--mainly because they seemed interested in eather doing resurch I wasn't able to equal, or write more fiction in the same vain, which seems even more impossable ------- In all this looking for sorses, I wonder if not a bit of trying to explain art.... It would also be interesting to see if anyone could trace the sorse of the names Jack Vance uses.. (Everyone insist he has such a guift for inventing them.)

The book reviews are all fine, but beyond my ability to comment on. -- Carter is fine, and Tucker is moreso. One wonders if more odd things happen to Mr. Tucker than us common herdies, or he just writes them up so much better. (And that's not so "just")

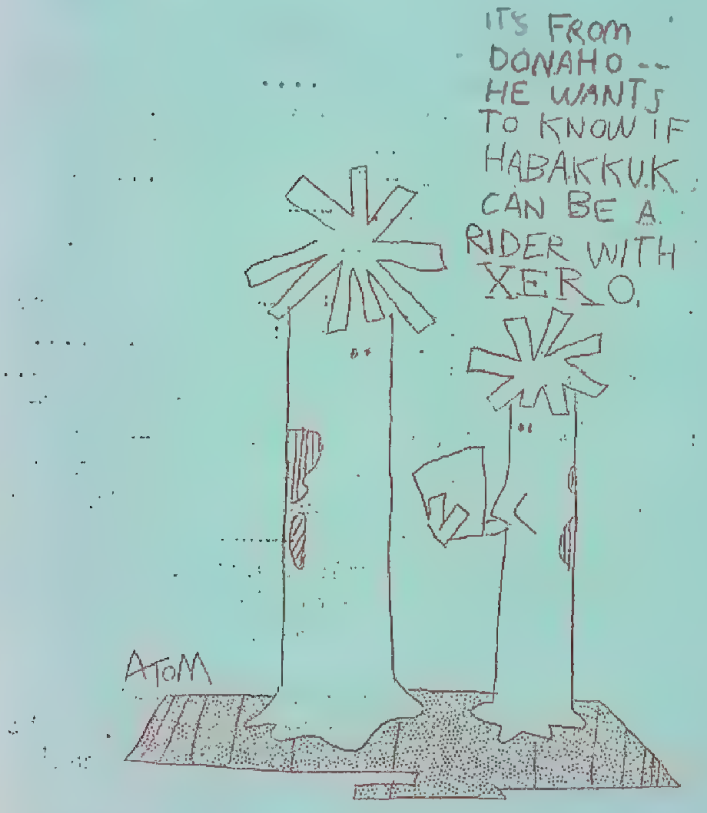
The one trouble with Collins article on selling a paperback was that it wasn't

written by Mr. Tucker. Having read Pleiades Pimples, I kept expecting Collins to go into details about the kind of contract you signed; were to check on copyrights; who got how much; and the muckel of mistakes to watch out for.. It isn't Mr. Collins falt that he isn't Mr. Tucker, but I am going to have to list this as a history rather than a how-to article.. --This is, ofcourse, not to say it wasn't interesting..

Coulson's reviews leave me with a fealing of being some-what out of touch.. I have a box of unanswered fanzines. I have answered a good four inch stack in the last month.. I have the fealing that I get more than I want, let alone read---- and yet.. And yet I don't recieve one of the fanzines reviewed.. I once subed to Amra and Kipple, but let them lapes in the great drought of last year.

I found the article on comics as interesting as ones I've read on the pulp-magazines before the '40s. I've seen very few of eather.. I was never a real fan of comics--though few could been alive durring that time without aquireing a few hundrad--just by standing in one place and letting the wind blow them to you... That I gave acouple of boxes of them to my neices in the early 50's, only proves that I should never part with anything.. Why, I could have sold them to comic fans and made a mit.... All I have left is the Fiction House Six (Planet, Ranger, Comando, and the three jungle books); and my Pogo's, Mad's and it's companion. I can't think of the name, which shows what kind of a mind I have.---- //PANIC -PL// I never cared for Marvel, Superman, Wonder Woman, or their closer copies.. (I disliked Marvel, as I found him unbearably corny) My favorite was Bat Man, Green Lantern, and the Black Hacks.....Or atleast they are the ones I can remember with pleasure.

On the letters--- I imagine Lynch was kidding, but I for one have no objection to "Creeping Deindorferism." There are many wrose things that could happen to fandom... Besides, much the same was once said, less in jest, about creeping Snearyism, and I feal duty bound to stand with the accused.. ---- The letters were more incomprehensable than usual, for the letter section of a fanzine not read before.. Interesting none the lest....There was one thing on this Westlake debate that quietly amused me. Now ofcourse I haven't read Astounding since the name change (or, rather since my sub ran out 20 months ago), so that might be the reason.. But for the life of me I can't think of anything that I remember reading by Westlake..--- His merely having been a reader of science fiction all those years too, is not a sign in it self that he knows what makes a good stf story. I don't know if he does or not, but being exposed to the field is no sure sign he understands it... There are person's in fandom, who have been around years; publish fanzines; belong to clubs; yet are not really fans. These "not-fans" never really seem to understand the spirit of fandom, or become a relaxed part of it.. Yet if you say anything to them they are quite shocked, and run through a list of all they have done... As if editing a fanzine make one a fan. Just so, writing science fiction does not make one a science fiction writer.



ANTHONY BOUCHER

(2643 Dana Street, Berkeley 4, California)

Just came across an item which should be of interest to all the fandom of comic strips. The November (1962) issue of Mystere-Magazine (French EQMM) contains an announcement (p 127) of the formation of Le Club des Bandes Dessinees, devoted to the appreciation & revival of the great strips of the period 1930-1940, which it looks upon as the Golden Age--especially Tarzan, Popeye, Blondie, Mandrake, Terry Guy L'Eclair, Prince Vaillant & Illico.

In case you think for a moment, as I did, that they're listing a couple of French masterworks unknown to us, it becomes clear later in the piece that Guy L'Eclair was created by Alex Raymond & Illico by George MacManus.

The Club hopes to bring out new reprints of all these if it can clear rights. Meanwhile it publishes a fanzine called Le Giff-Wiff (the allusion evades me... possibly the Fench name of the Jeep?).

That the Club are gentlemen of taste is evidenced by their comments on Guy L'Eclair: "this series, now so bastardized, was /in the 1930s/ a veritable chef-d'oeuvre of style, color & visionary imagination."

Membership fee is 10 New Francs (probably a little more for transatlantic members). The address is: Le Club des Bandes Dessinees, BP 71-06, Paris.

VIC RYAN

(Room 308, 2309 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois)

Thankee for Xero 9. I'm sorry that I didn't get anything vaguely resembling a chance to at least glance through it during the convention, since I'm now eager to compare the finely chiseled (but certainly not bored) damsel on page 26 with Pat; surely they aren't one and the same. //No, but I never get bored either. -PL// (I only hope that Mrs. Camper doesn't notice this; it's perhaps the most obscene thing I've yet seen in a fanzine -- and you know what I mean, don't you?) //Yep. -PL//

Well, I liked the issue anyhow. I'm not sure which was the better reading: Tucker on a book he's found amusing or Collins and his shoptalk. Tucker's perhaps at his best when he turns his attention at length to stupid books, and The Other Side of the Universe apparently qualifies. I only hope Bob hasn't fallen into a trap that only yesterday he was insisting had ensnared Ted White: mistaking satire for serious -- and fuggheaded -- writing. The book in question was The Sirens of Titan, if you remember, and the question was whether it was bad straight fiction or good satire. It's to Bob's credit that he makes the book so unappealing that I doubt anyone will take the time to read it and thus be able to offer a counter-argument.

> //I know the "trap" you mean, but don't worry for Tucker's sake. It was only a social satire, not a literary one; it was deadly serious and it could well pass as one of the worst sf books published in the last 20 years. -PL//

Making a fantastic paperback seems to be rather more complex than I'd imagined it. The only serious omission from an otherwise vastly interesting article is this little matter of money. I'm sure Collins doesn't want to make the exact amount this little venture brought him known to either Xero's readership or the revenoo ers, but I wish he'd provided some indication of whether or not it's financially rewarding enough to prompt several qualified people to enter the field.

//Harry Warner's penny-an-hour estimate may have been exaggerated, but I doubt that the project would have paid Charlie unless there was at least a partial labor-of-love element, which there was. Of course this was Charlie's first, and he learned as he worked; some of our mass-production anthologists like Groff Conklin and Judy Merril have surely worked out a routine for many of the matters that Charlie had to feel his way through.

//On copyright clearances, both Charlie Collins and Avram Davidson have mentioned that there are two standard methods of handling them. Either the publisher will secure clearances at his own effort and expense, or he will grant the anthologist a fixed amount out of which the latter has to secure the clearances. In the latter case (which applied to Charlie), if the anthologist can clear all rights for less than the fixed amount, he is permitted to keep the difference in return for his extra effort and possible personal expense (such as correspondence, etc.).

//Finally, although Charlie typed up all his own copies, there was nothing to keep him from paying a public stenographer's fee to have it done for him. Again, he opted to work harder, but he saved money by doing it. -PL//

I'd have to disagree with Buck Coulson's statements anent the worth of fanzine review columns. Assuming that the subjective worth of anything in fandom is justification enough to be worth doing it, the fanzine review column can serve as a completely valuable "archive" of the fanzines of any day and age. This is true of any such review column, but, of course, it's much more pleasant merely to read the good ones for roughly the same information. (In fact, I wish there were more current columns like "Jung and Thoughtless" that would at least make an effort to identify trends.

Regrets for the imminent demise of Xero, but I suppose there's something to be said for a little fannish variety. I only hope you manage to produce a good final issue. You might have done well to mention you'd see to it that the letters concerning Xero 10's material reached print somehow; I'm sure people will be more willing to contribute if they know they're to get their expected allowance of printed egoboo. McCain deals with this final issue problem in his "How to Win Readers and Influence BNFs" series in Oblique, and he pretty much reached the conclusion that there were just some things people shouldn't know.

> //A good point, and one taken care of in the editorial. But to reiterate, (a) there will be a Xero Index Edition; and (b) it will include a final selection of letters commenting on Xero 10. I don't know when it will be published, but it will be published. -PL//

ERIC BENTCLIFFE

(51, Thorn Grove, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, England)

You know this penultimate Xero is an awfully impressive fanzine; I can't think of any single issue of any other fanzine that has had so much solidly interesting content as this at all...take a bow! //Thank you. We both bow. -PL// Whoops, watch that cuspidor, your 'tache nearly got it, Dick...

If I had to face the difficult task of acclaiming the best article in this issue I think I'd plump for the Norm Clarke exposition on "The Greatest Shows Unearthly". This is a subject almost completely new to me and I found it fascinating reading. There was (and mebbe still is) a Moon-ride at Battersea Park in London (the fairground left over from the Festival of Britain exhibition), but I wasn't particularly impressed with it - it just wasn't done on a big enough scale, it just wasn't FANTASTIC enough for me. I'd dearly love to have a time-machine and go visit Coney Island in its heyday.

Lin Carter seems to be contributing much worthwhile material to Xero of late; I've enjoyed his Tolkien articles although they do tend to detract from the sheer atmosphere of the books rather than enhance this. It would appear that he's switched from Tolkien to James Bond with his "Kiss the Blood off my Patois", nicely done this but it needed a little more building up of the protagonist...we'd have loaned him Harrison for the occasion if he'd only asked!

I haven't read Burroughs for years but I'm rather tempted by all the hoohah to buy a few of the new paperbacks that are appearing to refresh my memory...pot boilers that most of them are, I doubt that my early readings of Carson, Carter, & Co. will ever completely fade from my mind. //Get the Canaveral editions. -PL//

AICFAD was once more very interesting, but since I've never read any of the subject matter it doesn't have the same interest for me that it must have for the Stateside fans. It does, as the first article did, inspire me to delve back into my boyhood reading, but as I haven't any source material (and not much time) I doubt that anything will come of this inspiration at the moment. Anyone want any unusable inspiration?!? THE MAKING OF A FANTASTIC PAPERBACK was a most informative article, and may I go on record as being one fan who has no aspirations to become a pro; it sounds like too much work! But then, so does what I do for a living when I come to think of it....

MIKE MCINERNEY

(81 Ivy Drive, Meriden, Connecticut)

All I can say is, the latest issue of Xero is the best yet. Since you already know my opinion of the earlier issues, this is the highest praise I can bestow. About that cover...I don't think I like as much as I liked the cover of #8. This is perhaps a bit odd, since the general consensus of everybody around here is that #9's is the more effective of the two. I suppose that because it is so experimental and new that it takes a while for my fannishly oriented tastes to get used to it. It reminds me of what I'd consider the perfect Lovecraft illo.

In your editorial you seem to be indicating that Shelby Vick invented ViColor. Now this seems highly unlikely, most mimeo instruction booklets describe ViColor. If Vick had invented it only 10 years ago I doubt that it could have gotten into such wide use already. Therefore I'll have to surmise that he introduced it to fandom. That's the way I heard it anyhow, perhaps you heard differently? //You're right, I was wrong. -RL//

The drawing of the interior workings of the mimeo was quite helpful in understanding how the machine operates. Being pretty much mechanically stupid I need nice little pictures to illustrate whenever I'm struggling with any machine. Your Rextripe process seems insanely easy. Indeed the process is so easy that three pages to explain it seem to me to be much more than needed. Don't get me wrong, I appreciated the extra wordage because it helped me to understand how the heck the machine works. But for someone who has a screen machine the extra bit would be wasted. //Apparently I didn't invent Rextripe either, but merely re-invented it and introduced it to fandom. At any rate, Bill Bowers and Bill Mallardi, in DOUBLE BILL 4 use Rextripe for their cover, and explain that their local Gestetner people knew all about the process...and taught them a variation that saves cleaning the screen!

//What you do is mount a blank stencil -- nothing on it at all -- in the conventional fashion, and then spread the ink on it. Then mount the stencil you plan to run over this, and you're in business. It would also seem that this method overcomes the limitation to vertical stripes, and permits other patterns as well. It also permits simple one-color work without changing/cleaning screens. -RL//

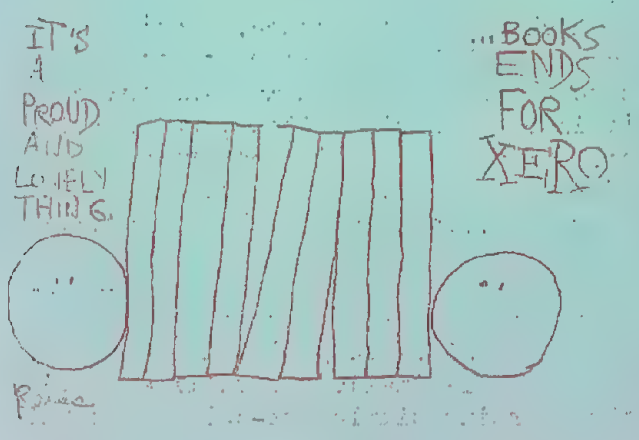
Oh well, quite a few people around the University of Connecticut thought Reiss's joke was very funny. But the thing that really broke up most people was FANDI in Xero 8. Even without being able to get the in-group jokes they were holding their sides with laughter.

//Hmm. Was "Fandi" the best single item Xero ever published? Want to take a stab at picking what was the best single thing... article, art, comic strip, etc...that ever appeared here? It might make an interesting EI topic for the Index Edition. Not just you, Mike, although your opinion is welcome. Everybody's opinion is welcome. -PL//

As far as I'm concerned Burroughs' Mars books are pretty poor stuff. I've got the Dover three-novel collection, and I just barely could force myself to read the first of the three. I could not force myself to read either the second or the third though I tried several times. They were just too boring. So maybe I am past the optimum age for first exposure. I don't know. One thing I do know is that I still like the Tarzan books. So I'm not against Burroughs as an author ...just as the author of the Mars books.

The Ebert bit just makes me more jealous of people who live in New York. If there aren't enough fabulous fen who live there, others have to stop by on their way through. Faunch. //All right, stop by on your way through. -PL//

You are of course correct in stating that nothing will happen as a result of the Camper article. What could happen anyway? I suppose fandom may gain a few new fen, but certainly there won't be any mass migration of new fen. After all, the highest feasible circulation for the average faneditor is 200. I know, I've been fooling around with higher circulations and it is just too much work. I don't mind running off or collating 400 copies, but when it comes to addressing, stuffing envelopes, and stamping that many my enthusiasm runs out very quickly. I suppose larger circulations could be achieved by putting out smaller issues or publishing less frequently, but that is too much to sacrifice. So the best zines (Xero is a very good case in point right now) would be available to only 200 people. //Actually we've been hitting around 250 - 275 the last couple of issues, but you are certainly right. The work is discouraging, and the expense...mama mia. Just the envelopes and stamps (5¢ plus 17¢) get prohibitive when your circulation goes too high. Fortunately, we distributed about 150 copies of Xero 9 in person, either here at home just before the Chicon, or at the con. But no such luck with this issue. Unless we decide to sit it out till Labor Day. But it now looks as if we'll have the thing done by mid-May, and a hold of over three months just to save postage would be too much. -PL//



The other people (all the neos attracted by Camper's article) would get the crudzines and have a very high dropout rate. Thus, even if the article did attract people to fandom the ultimate effect woul be the same. Zero!

By the way, I remember the TIME and LIFE articles, and I've never read them!!! And I'm certainly not an antiquarian. Of course I've read so much about them that it seems as though I've read them. They have become legends of fan history, made moreso by the fact that until Camper showed up all fans of the last 10 years or so have never seen anything in any public print about fandom. Thus it was

almost unbelievable that LIFE or TIME could have covered cons. Perhaps sometime in the future the Camper thing will become a legend. And then I'll walk over to the poor little neos at the cons and say through my old and tired grey beard... "Son, I read that article." Naturally they won't believe such a statement.

//Will you ever be able to make that statement? Unless Shirley Camper was kidding us all along, something must have gone very wrong with the article. Having been scheduled for the December 1962 COSMO the article failed to appear because it was returned for revisions, and no acceptable draft was produced by deadline. Still, there was the January issue. And the February one. And March. And April. I have a feeling that once an announced article like this fails to appear, it is unlikely ever to appear, and that whatever chance it ever had becomes less and less with the passing of time. -PL//

Clarke's article was excellent. The only thing that would have improved it would have been to give more details. And as he said, they are hard to get. Maybe we'll be hearing more from Norm in Xero 10? I certainly hope so. //Done.//

As usual I loved the Stewart Page. Ghod, sometimes I think he's my favorite fan artist. //Who is your favorite the rest of the time? -PL// Perfect registration too... Great!

RON HAYDOCK

(2771 San Marino, Los Angeles 6, California)

Xero 9 came hurtling in a day or two ago, and many thanks for same. Evidently, after seeing and reading most of the nine issues, what you're publishing is something akin to the "Saturday Review of Literature", fan-style. The types of articles you're running, and, even more important, the calibre of the writing itself, leads me to this conclusion. It'll be a Bad Day at Fan Rock when the last issue comes slipping off the rollers.

The item I found most interesting was Collins' "Making of a Fantastic Paperback", namely because I've got a vampire's stake in the publishing industry myself. His article couldn't help but remind me of the solid year of work, running around, name-calling, conferences, digging up sales reports and the like, more work, voluminous correspondence, lawyers and lawyer's lawyers, and (hell) just about everything else I went through before the first issue of "Fantastic Monsters" hit the stands. Anyone who thinks, as Collins subtly puts it, that producing a paperback (or mag, for that matter), is just gosh-wow-loads-of-fun has another think coming.

Heh -- as comic villains used to say. Seems that Harmon and I started something out this way when we talked a theatre manager into running the Marvel serial. Since that particular showing, the serial has been sort of "revived": three different theatres have picked it up, namedly because of the enthusiastic kid response to the initial showing. Ever onward, O Captain of Marvels....

//It's a grand serial, as serials go. The Fantasy Film Club has showed it three or four times, to SRO crowds every time. Of course anything above 20 is SRO for the FFC, but another group, the Informal Film Club, recently rented a coffee house for an evening to show the film. They were able to seat something like 112, and then they went SRO -- and they were charging $1.50 admission, too, and it was no "kid" crowd at all.

//Will Lieberson came and gave a fine talk at the halfway point, and the whole evening was a roarer. Next week the City College SF Club is showing it as their semi-annual serial, and they expect a mob too. -PL//

RICHARD KYLE
(2126 Earl Avenue, Long Beach 6, California)

Xero 9 is your best issue yet. It's a marvelous job from beginning to end. It's been a long, long time since I've enjoyed any magazine as well as this. The great success of Xero isn't principally due to its contributors -- although they have certainly done well for themselves -- but to your own editorial work. I have great admiration for good editors. You're good editors. //Blush.//

As you promised, Bhob Stewart's cover is very effective, and one of your best. I won't pretend to understand the meaning but there's no denying the power of it. Stiles's back cover is exceptional, too (although there may be something, in a way, to what the chap says). Other than an illustration in Amra, this is the first time I've seen Steve work outside the mimeo medium. He does a good job. //But Stiles's back cover was mimeod, from a stenafaxed stencil. -bhob//

Stiles walks away with the inside art; his bunny rabbit cartoon was the best. Wonderful stuff. "Writers at Work" was okay, but nothing special, although maybe I missed something. Atom was Atom, and Adkins was Adkins. Andy Reiss's cartoon was unpleasant. You've got to lay off the blue and red makeup in "EI", Pat; it doesn't become you. Although I like Larry Ivie's work, I'm afraid St. John and Roy Krenkel have spoiled me on Burroughs (and, too, there seems something wrong in copying "preliminary sketches" on a stencil).

The real highlight inside is the work of your "Graphics and Layout Director." Well, he deserves the title this time around. It's his best work to date. The layout for "The Silver Dagger" was tops in that department and the graphics for "Kiss the Blood off my Patois" were so inventive it almost makes me cuss. (Although I wish your G & L Director had had the compassion to present a less edited view, as well, of the dish blowing her top. Say a five or ten page spread.)

> //He's not G & L D any more. We found that everyone was slopping over into eachother's job: Dick and I were getting involved in layouts (whoops!): bhob was helping to select material from submissions, etc;..so we decided for this final Xero to share the editorial credit without specialization.-PL//

Wordwise, Xero was very big, too. For the AnLab:

1. "The Greatest Shows Unearthly" by Norman Clarke. Outstanding. This measures up to your best: Chris Steinbrunner on movie serials, Don Thompson on the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, and all the others. The subject is really fascinating. I hope you turn up more information on "A Yankee Circus on Mars" by the time the postultimate issue rolls around, at least. //Done.//

By the way, with a few more anecdotes for the commercial trade, the article ought to sell to some professional magazine. It's got all the ingredients -- plus color art possibilities that should make an art editor light up like he'd swallowed a pinball machine.

2. "Kiss the Blood off my Patois" by Lin Carter. If Lin had played this straight with the fan tie-in (although it's well-handled) I'd give it an easy first. The thing approaches a work of art; as straight parody, it would have been. Lin, please recast the ending in some non-fannish way and sell this for dollars. //Done.//

3. "Notes on Tolkien" by Lin Carter, "The Making of a Fantastic Paperback" by Charles M. Collins, and "Captain Billy's Whiz-Gang" by Roy Thomas.

"Tolkien" Part III was good; more interesting than Part II, a little less so than Part I. This was a very worthwhile series -- for me, at least. Until Carter's articles came along, my Tolkien intentions were not honorable.

I enjoyed Collins's style as much as I did his article. It's a refreshing change. The red tape of publishing is appalling. It makes you wonder. Perhaps "Captain Billy" should rate a little higher -- say, 2 minus or 3 plus -- but I never was a Fawcett fan, except for Captain Marvel, C.C. Beck, Mac Raboy and the very early Fawcett comics. The artwork, even on strips I followed, was generally dreadful, and the paper was stiff and crackly, or something.

I believe the early Bulletman artist was Jon Small, who also did quite a bit of work over at Street & Smith, but it's been so many years I can't promise anything. In the strip's declining days, Newt Alfred (who once messed up Astounding) was one of ~~the~~ principal artists, maybe the main one. The major reason for the failure of Nickel Comics, I believe, was the "skimpy" 32 pages. I used to buy it, every issue, but -- even though I was getting my money's worth, and knew it -- it always seemed as though I were being cheated some way or other. I wonder if the book would have sold at a dime, 64 pages, and twice-a-month? "Warlock the Wizard" had an interesting gimmick that Thomas doesn't mention, an oddly sympathetic one. In exchange for his magic powers, Warlock was made ugly. To the reader, his face is normal, but to those Warlock meets in the strip, his features are terrifying. I don't know if the writer invented it, or if it is a commonplace in the theory of witchcraft, but back in 1940 it fascinated me.

I remember liking the early "Ibis, the Invincible" and "Spy Smasher", too, (although, for some reason or other, the "Spy Smasher" art seemed very good to me then, in the beginning).

"Captain Billy" is quite well written. Unhappily, the artwork is the poorest you've run to date. I suspect the same lack of familiarity with the medium that Moriarty suffered from the first go-round. And a little too much confidence in his ability as an illustrator (his BLA cartoons in Alter-Ego were fine). Too, considering how little known he is today, I'd like to have seen more extensive pictorial coverage of Master Man. Well, that's the way it goes. The article itself was quite good, though.

4. Rog Ebert's contributions. I shouldn't really rate 'em, because I just don't dig 'em.

Features:

"Absolute Xero" was best. I've been rereading Burroughs myself lately. As you say, Burroughs was not nearly as shallow as some of his critics have charged. But what surprises me is that he was not nearly as poor a writer, either. Burroughs could write -- and write well -- when he seems to have found it necessary or desirable. It's rather a shame he was so successful. Perhaps if he hadn't been, he might have worked harder on plot-structure and dialogue and characterization. As it is, I think he only worked hard enough to satisfy himself -- which wasn't quite hard enough for him to reach the standards I think he might have. Of course, all he really needed was that peculiar talent of his of seeming to talk of real events; with that under his belt he could have done rewrites of Little Red Riding Hood and made damn near as much money.

My own favorite of the Burroughs novels is The Master Mind of Mars. But perhaps that's because it's been so many years since I first read it. I reread it in 1950, just before I was drafted, and then I gave away the Amazing Stories Annual (which I'd bought in a second-hand store for a dime a few years before) it was in, to somebody or other. I must have had rocks in my head. But, in 1950, it was still good -- so maybe it it still is.

(I also sold the first issue of Weird Tales just before I was drafted. I gave the fellow a cut-rate on it: $7.00. He never did pay me, and I don't know where he is now; but I'll bet you he spends fifteen minures a day snickering.)

Carter's book column seemed a shade weak this time. (Probably he was too busy writing marvelous stuff like "Kiss".) Mahlon Blaine may be contemporary, all right, but I wouldn't call him distinguished by any flight of the imagination. He's not only unsuitable for Burroughs, but for damned near any other author. And, personally, I wouldn't recommend The Monster Men to anyone. God, what a lemon.

I suspect the reason no one mentioned Armageddon 2419 A.D. was the source of the Buck Rogers strip is that the publisher or editor didn't want to stab the book in the back. The John F. Dille people have mishandled the strip for most of its career -- since Phil Nolan left it back in '39 or '40 -- and today the recommendation shouldn't do much more than kill a few sales. More than a few, probably. The last I saw of "Buck Rogers" it was so bad as to be nigh unbelievable.

//"Buck Rogers" is more than a very bad comic strip. The phrase is synonymous with science fiction in much of the public mind, and the name Buck Rogers is part of our culture, just as Tarzan is. Don Wollheim, a smart sf editor if there is one, blazoned "Buck Rogers" on the Ace edition of the book, and I think sales will bear him out as having made a right move. -PL//

I rather favor "The Prince of Mars Returns", serialized in the large-sized Fantastic Adventures, over "Space Guards". It wasn't as well-written, I'll concede, but, I don't know, "Prince" had something....

(There was an ERB novelet or short novel in the second issue of Fantastic Adventures that I liked at the time. I've been told it was lousy. Do you know, Dick? I can't trust my taste at ten too well. Or maybe I was eleven. That'd make a difference. The story was called "The Scientists Revolt", and it wasn't like any of Burroughs other stories in plot.)

//I've scheduled it for the Canaveral book "BEYOND THE FARTHEST STAR and Other SF Stories by ERB" just to get a copy of that story! Sam Moskowitz maintains that it was not written as an sf story at all, and was completely rewritten by Ray Palmer for the second issue of Fantastic Adventures.

//If this is true, Canaveral will be interested to see if the original version can be turned up. Then, if it is, we'll have to decide which version is more suitable for republication at this time. (Not which is artistically superior by somebody's theoretical yardstick.) -RL//

H. Vincent Lynch's paragraph in the middle of page 81 pleased me no end. But the last sentence left me as dumbfounded as it must have you (although not near so irritated, I suspect).

Since Stranger in a Strange Land was published, I've been seeing the phrase everywhere. It's almost a cliche -- but one I never noticed before. Kind of gets me. //Check. Ever since this discussion sensitized us to the phrase, Dick & I have come across it any number of times. We were watching a 1939 movie of The Man in the Iron Mask and it popped up there. -PL// It also kind of gets me that the book received the Hugo. It didn't deserve it. It won, I think, because of its prestige. As did Warhoon, which is a good magazine, but which has even more prestige than excellence. Well, I don't vote any more, so I have no grounds much for kicking, I suppose. But I quit voting because the Hugo is given out about as discriminatingly as the Oscar. If there were more science fiction critics, I guess a kind of Science Fiction Critics Circle Award could be given -- but there aren't. Or are there?

//There was an International Fantasy Awards Committee that gave a series of IFAs; the Committee was mixed between sf pros and fans, and the idea was that qualified judges would make qualitative judgements. The IFA antedated the Hugo, although they did overlap briefly. More recently there were the First Annual Spectrum Awards, which made interesting reading, but, hell, anybody can list his personal favorites for the preceding year and call them "Awards." That doesn't make them mean any more than anybody else's list of personal favorites. -PL//

Frederik Pohl's letter irritated me and made me feel happy.

The very writers who may have written good unpublished stories are the ones who will never hear Pohl's words -- the non-professionals. The professionals, being much closer to the editorial ear, are bound to have a much better chance of selling their good off-beat stories (they're also bound to write more good stories, too, but it doesn't follow that the non-professional will write none). And where the professional will submit and resubmit stories to the market as editors and magazines come and go, the non-professional won't, not always.

Personally, I know of at least one good story that was never published. When I lived in Oakland, I met a guy who'd tried writing for the science fiction magazines back in the '30s. He'd thrown away most of the rejects but he kept a couple or three that he liked particularly. One of them was especially good. F. Orlin Tremaine would have loved to buy it then, I'm convinced; it was Astounding's kind of thing. Trouble was, the man never tried Astounding, not under Tremaine. He'd submitted it to Clayton Astounding and Wonder Stories and Amazing Stories, had it rejected and tossed it in a drawer with the others. After trying to sell another story or two he gave it up and went into the insurance business. When I met him he was a big sf collector, read all the stuff, and was making more money than he ever would have as a writer. I won't guarantee it was a good story, because I'm not a professional editor -- and I'm not Frederik Pohl, with his particular tastes -- but I think it was. And to say that he would never have been a top writer because he didn't stay with it is faulty. People have to eat. Writing isn't all that compelling.

But I mention this, not only because the story was a good one, but because the writer wasn't a professional. John Campbell had a story, about the same time, that he couldn't sell to Amazing or Wonder or Clayton Astounding, either. But he was a professional and knew the markets and when Tremaine became editor he submitted "Twilight" to him under the name of Don A. Stuart.

There are too many "accidents" of this kind that can happen for Pohl to make the statement. There are too many good stories that must just barely make it into print. (I cite Cordwainer Smith's first story, "Scanners Live in Vain", which

must surely have been rejected by all the other sf magazines before it ended up in Fantasy Book, where it was seen by Pohl and picked up for one of his anthologies. How many writers of other "Scanners" didn't even know Fantasy Book existed?)

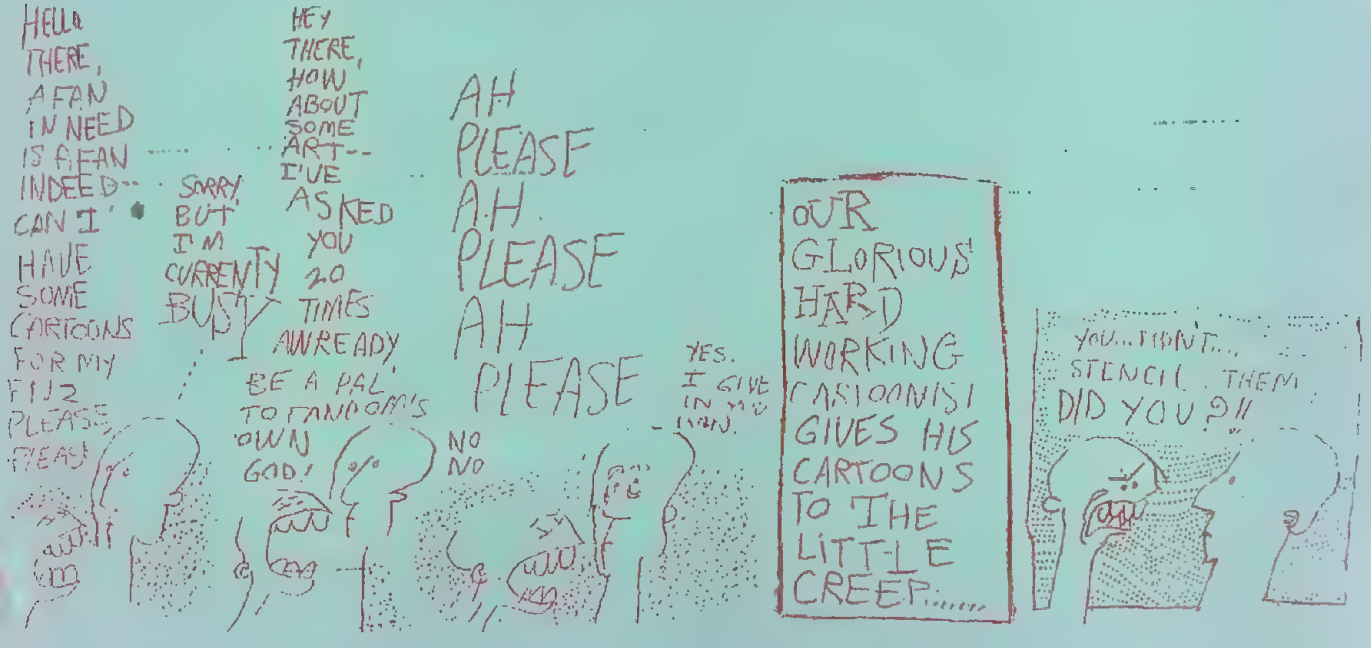
In 1932 there were four markets for magazine science fiction. There was Clayton Astounding, Wonder, Amazing, and Weird Tales. Today, the sf writer who writes in less than novel length -- which means most newcomers -- has four markets he can contribute to: Analog, Galaxy-If-Tomorrow, Amazing-Fantastic, and Fantasy and Science Fiction. At a rough guess I'd say that no more words of magazine science fiction are being published each month than there were in 1932. Those magazines were fat then.

Four markets. I don't think they represent the diversity necessary to guarantee a completely fair hearing for all kinds of good science fiction.

And, finally, what about the fiction that isn't so very good, but in which there is enormous potential? Heinlein's "Life Line" is no masterwork, but Campbell somehow recognized the talent there. To be sure, any sf editor back then who turned down the story wouldn't have been turning down a really good story -- he'd only have been turning down one of the best science fiction writers we've had. And if Heinlein (and if not Heinlein, some potential Heinlein) had dropped sf in discouragement, any one of those editors could have said, well, all the good science fiction stories that have been written have been printed, or soon will be. Any one of those editors would have been right, too. All he'd written, then, was "Life Line"....

I'll concede that most of the good sf is published. But not all of it -- and that can make a world of difference.

But Pohl made me happy when he said he didn't expect his magazines to really shape up until the first of the year. So far "The Dragon Masters" was wonderful, and now I'm beginning to look forward to Heinlein and Clement. If Pohl comes through with Galaxy and If, maybe I'll change my mind about there not being markets enough to guarantee a fair hearing.


HELLO THERE, A FAN IN NEED IS A FAN INDEED... CAN I HAVE SOME CARTOONS FOR MY FUZ PLEASE, PLEASE!
SORRY, BUT I'M CURRENTLY BUSY
HEY THERE, HOW ABOUT SOME ART-- I'VE ASKED YOU 20 TIMES ALREADY
BE A PAL TO FANDOM'S OWN GOD!
AH PLEASE AH PLEASE AH PLEASE
NO NO
YES. I GIVE IN NO MO WAN.
OUR GLORIOUS HARD WORKING CARTOONIST GIVES HIS CARTOONS TO THE LITTLE CREEP.....
YOU... PRINT... STENCIL... THEM DID YOU?!!

(163 Brighton Street, Belmont, Massachusetts)

The size of Xero 9 croggles me slightly, since I like to comment on everything, if I comment at all, but here goes... //It croggled us too, especially when we had to collate it...and this issue looks just as bad. -PL//

"It's a Burroughs Year" -- I share your problem. Beside my bed I have a pile of books which include the Dover ERB trilogy, the first Conan book, Skylark of Space, a Lovecraft collection, ad nauseum. Naturally I want to read all these things, but I also want to keep up with the better prozines and new books. And like any other red-blooded fan, I just don't have time. (There was a time when I would stay up all night with a book, but since I joined fandom I stay up all night with a typewriter.) So I still haven't read any Burroughs, and for the same reason I was unable to enjoy the "Notes on Tolkien."

As for Mrs. Camper, in the past I've gotten a large charge out of seeing how horribly things are distorted in articles about sf and sf-fandom. Like Charlie Brown, I like to "bang my head against a tree" in frustration, now and then. When the first issue of my fanzine came out, there was a brief mention of it in the school newspaper. Let me quote from that mention: "...'fanzine', the latest name for a science fiction magazine...." Well, you say Mrs. Camper is doing extensive research. We'll see....

//Or will we, after all? -PL//

I enjoyed Rog Ebert's things; I suppose there's not much else to say about them.

That original Trip to the Moon thrill-ride sounds terrific. I wonder: Have we anything ~~that~~ skillful today? Perhaps someone would like to cover the modern extravaganza for Xero 10, or somesuch zine. Someone who Knows, that is.

//It will have to be "somesuch zine", not Xero 10, but there has already been a good bit on Dizzyland in LA-area zines, especially from Bruce Pelz and Jack Harness. -PL//

So Lin Carter can't stand paying 50¢ for a pb, huh? Perhaps he can remember way back when (like the early fifties) pbs only cost a quarter. Perhaps he would like to dig into his collection and pull out a few of those 25¢ books and compare their paper, bindings, and cover artwork with a few of the recent books. Quite a change, huh? And if he's really ambitious, he might try finding out how much paper and printing costs have risen during the last decade. And if he's still disgruntled, he doesn't have to buy the 50¢ books. New York is full of second-hand bookstores. //I did pull out some 25¢ pbs of the early fifties -- and earlier -- and their quality stands up quite well against today's products. Fashions have changed in typography, cover design and illustration, but that is not the same as saying that they have improved. Your other two points, however, are well taken. -PL//

Re: Bob Tucker. The librarian at the Young Adults section of the Boston Public Library is always after me to review sf books, but there's a dividend. I get to keep the books I review. This is sometimes because publishers send complimentary copies to libraries, under the stipulation that the libraries not put the books into circulation, since the publishers fear that this would Hurt Sales. So the library wants someone to review these books so that it will know whether or not to buy a copy for circulation. So I review some of the sf books and get the copies I review. The other times my library friend gets her own review copies, since she does reviews for several of the library magazines. When she receives sf books, she gives the galleys, hardbounds or whatever to me, and I write the review. But one way or another, I get to keep the books, and the moral is: It is indeed better to be a small frog in a big puddle than a big frog in a small puddle, but no matter which way you slice it, we're still frogs. Right, Bob?

"Writers at Work" is fine, but Randy shouldn't be wasting his time in that bar. He should be turning his daily quota over to JWCJr. (I'll bet you didn't know that Garrett invented the Dean Drive one day while rereading a 1947 Amazing Stories.) /I'll bet you didn't know it was the June issue. -PL/

Although I am not now nor have ever been a member of comic fandom, I must admit I enjoyed AICFAD IX. It seems to me that when someone knows how to write, and knows what he's talking about (one of the necessities of writing is not taking for granted the fact that the reader knows anything) he can turn out an article of interest whether or not you give a damn about the subject matter. Roy Thomas has done this for me.

I suppose I should say something about the cover, but I'm afraid it had no effect on me at all. I said to myself, that's nice, and then opened Xero up to read. Sorry, bhob, but my feeling towards it was, it keeps the first page from getting dirty. I did like bhob's other illos, though, and I enjoyed Andy Reiss's cartoon.

Questions: first of all, do you have any copies of any issue of Xero other than #9 available? Second, would any reader sell me any back issues, or, better yet, a set of back issues? /We have no copies around of any back issue, but we have one complete spare file set, which we plan to donate to the Discon, and which will be auctioned there. -PL/

JOHN BOARDMAN

(P. O. Box 22, New York 33, New York)

After reading parts II and III of the critique of Tolkien's Hobbit and Lord of the Rings I find myself interested in reading the first of the series as well. I'd like to buy a copy of Xero #7 if any are available. /See above./

I find these Tolkien books rattling good epic fantasy, despite a distaste for some of the underlying assumptions. There is a subtle racism running through them - offhand I can think of at least three uses of the phrase "Then the blood of the Numenoreans became mixed with that of lesser men" or variants thereof. Men are classified by racial divisions into "High," "Middle", and "Low" - and the race called variously Haradrim or Swertings are clearly Negroes and stigmatized as being little better than Orcs.

Hobbits, Men, and Dwarves are believable, because they have characters complex enough to be interesting, and are capable of both good and evil impulses and actions. But Elves and Orcs are too monochromatic to appeal to the reader. Were there never any labor problems at Cirdan's shipyard? Who worked the fields that raised the food that supported Rivendell? Were the Elves always so maddeningly good-natured? Did Orcs never show any affection among themselves?

Together with Tolkien's subtle racism is an equally subtle pro-medieval romanticism of the same sort that permeates T. H. White's The Once and Future King. Any craft or machinery dating from beyond the late-medieval period is equated with dirt, noise, unpleasantness, and an Orcish state of mind. We are left with a vision of happy little peasants and craftsmen, sweating out 14-hour days at their fields or forges, and somehow living past 100 despite medieval conditions of health and safety.

BOB BRINEY
(459 Littleton Street, West Lafayette, Indiana)

I've found out your secret... You're trying to blind fandom! That orange-on-pink on the bacover of #9 is enough to curdle the eyeballs... Assuming they had not already been a little addled by the phosphorescent red on the front cover, that is. //That orange-on-pink was an experiment in visibility techniques. Usually we assume that maximum contrast gives maximum visibility: white on black, black on white, or any light/dark contrast. That time, however, the idea was to jar your eyeballs, right enough, by printing in a similar but non-matching ink. Visibility through color clash instead of color contrast. It seems to have worked.//

Other than the colors, however, neither cover contains much that impresses me. Which is in contrast to the interior contents: they continue to improve beyond all reasonable bounds.

It is indeed a Burroughs year, with Canaveral going strong and Ace scheduling two-a-month pb reprints. The Aces all have Krenkel covers (except for one Emsh on the second half of The Moon Maid), and I hear rumors that he will take over the illustrating of the rest of the Canaveral titles. If that's so, I'll probably end up buying the books, even the ones I already have in other editions. In his pen-and-ink and pencil work, Krenkel is better than St. John was. I hope his paintings live up to this quality.

//Since this letter was written, of course, the top is really off Burroughs! Ballantine has the authorized Mars and Tarzan series, Ace is about to sign with ERBInc for all the rest, and Canaveral is getting all hardcover rights including magazine stories never in book form, and a tall stack of manuscripts never before published in any form.//

A couple of months ago I read through the first eight of the Mars books for the first time in fifteen years. I was a bit hesitant at the start, but I found myself in the middle of the fourth title almost before I knew it. At age fourteen, of course, they were the greatest things I'd ever read, and a surprising amount of the old magic remains. I purposely didn't re-read Synthetic Men of Mars (number 9 in the series), since I remember thinking it was terrible even the first time around.

If you can find a copy, I highly recommend The Outlaw of Torn. It should still be in print in a Pinnacle pb. It was Burroughs' first novel, but nobody wanted to buy it until the Tarzan and Mars stories had made him famous. To me, it still seems to be one of his best books: a rousing historical novel of medieval England. //You're right on Synthetic Men -- bad, bad Burroughs -- and on Outlaw of Torn -- a nice little historical. Wait till you see I Am a Barbarian and some others of the manuscript cache! Wait till I see them! So far they're just a mouthwatering list. -RL//

Back to Xero...Lin Carter's fin de siecle belle lettre is recherche, but has its own air of [illegible]. Saki sprinkled with oregano... My God!

By now I have read the first of the Tolkien books. I enthuse at you -- it's great! I'm going nuts because I can't find a single bookstore either in Lafayette or in Chicago that has the other two in the trilogy. I'll have to break down and send for them.

STEVE STILES

(1809 Second Avenue, New York 28, New York)

I've finally worked up the courage to comment on Xero #9; big fanzines always scare me (as well as little babies and black cocker spaniels). A questions which immediately comes to mind after surveying the overall issue is this: What are you going to do for an encore? //Collapse! -PL//

After reading your "confessions" in the editorial, and digging all the colored art (particularly Trend's illo) I feel sad indeed that some way couldn't have been worked out for the Rex to reside here at The Paclace. Actually, I don't feel that blue any more; I just ran off some 22 pages on the ditto without a hitch, and with readable copy, even! Even so, I fully intend to buy a Rex, or something very similar, when I become Rich and Famous and like that.

Anyway, thank you for the extra Xero 9 bacovers, my new stationery which you will notice I'm typing this on. People like it, and I think it's fun to type on, the way I make the typing run down this guy's side, 'n all. I have gained four correspondents this week. Whee! //What kind of correspondents, Steve? -PL//

It goes without saying that all of bhob's artwork was excellent. Although it goes without saying, I'm saying it anyway because maybe bhob will be over some night and you can read this to him and make him feel Good All Over. I know what it's like to be a fanartist.

"AFTER XERO... WHAT??

Well, I've started reading Burroughs sf for the first time in my life, and I must say I'm pleased. Tarzan has never moved me that much //What about Jane? -PL// but the current series for Ace (with the purty Krenkel covers) are pretty exciting, and interesting style wise; like, Burroughs, with Rohmer, pretty well reflects in his writings the ideals of his particular era, which, as I say, is interesting. His latest book that I'm reading, Moon Men, particularly the Red Hawk section, strikes me as particularly imaginative and different from what other works I've read by ERB as he managed to cut his ties with the nineteen twenties: his earth in the Moon Maid, for example, strikes me as being a future 1920. Gosh, I'll bet I'm not making myself clear.

//On the contrary, you are making yourself perfectly clear, and you raise a perfectly valid point with regard to much science fiction, once a few years have passed An author's "future" is a sort of extension (the vogue word that we don't hear so much any more is 'extrapolation') of his present, and when things don't quite work out that way, the later reader gets a strange sensation of reading about a past-future. -RL//

Norm Clarke's article makes me feel rather unhappy with such palid places as Freedomland, and the hodgepodge that is Coney Island Today. Where in the world did Clarke get all his information? //See page 76.//

BETTY KUJAWA

(2819 Caroline Street, South Bend 14, Indiana)

Oddly this cover of Xero #9 didn't faze me or my eyes a bit...twas obviously a credibly realistic reproduction of an earlier Lupoff Party. That's Pat in the middle...Dick on the left...doing the twist...the odd-strange color and distortion is the effect of Lupoff Liquor as I well know from first-hand experience. I'll always try to think of you two looking as you do on the cover of Xero 9.

I have found, in Daniel Blum's A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE, 1900 - 1951, certain additional information concerning the great opening of the New York Hippodrome, the same information which, my Magic Eye tells me, Norman Clarke has found out from original sources and written on page 75 of the magazine in which you will print this letter!

The Shows Unearthly article, as you dern well know, was simply superb...it should be sent to SHOW, or maybe AMERICAN HERITAGE or HORIZON. Any one of those, especially SHOW, I'd say would Pay Good Money for such a splendid thing. It surely roused my sense of wonder...and my envy of them that lived back then and got to view such goings on. Our amusement parks here in town were small pickings indeed, and as I am rapidly nearing the end of my 30's I wasn't around to see and experience the Glories and the Wonders available earlier in Detroit and Chicago. Dammit! By the time I got taken to them spots the Gilded Super-duper Era was long gone. The Trip to the Moon...well, I got a weak-tea mild sort of latterday descendent of such, at the Chicago World's Fair in the early Thirties. The Children's Section, something like the Magic Island or the Enchanted Island. And a Buck Rogers show/exhibit. Wonder if any other fen got to see that. Yes, plus the big stores down in the Loop at Christmas with their "Trip To--" recall, I think, some sort of scenic railway trips for kiddies, to moon, Mars and Other Planets...again I wonder if any other fen saw those. No doubt you effete Easterners had some such in your Big Downtown Stores at Yuletime, no?

Merci for all the book reviews. /Sorry none this time./

A Ford Tri-Motor in Tucker's childhood???????? That made me sit up and yell for Gene...who checked up the facts on when the tri-fly-planes were active. Wouldn't you know...he's out at the gun club and I've plumb forgotten just when those planes did fly. But unless I'm mistaken Bob was no kid by that time. Or maybe I matured faaast and he took his own sweet time about it.

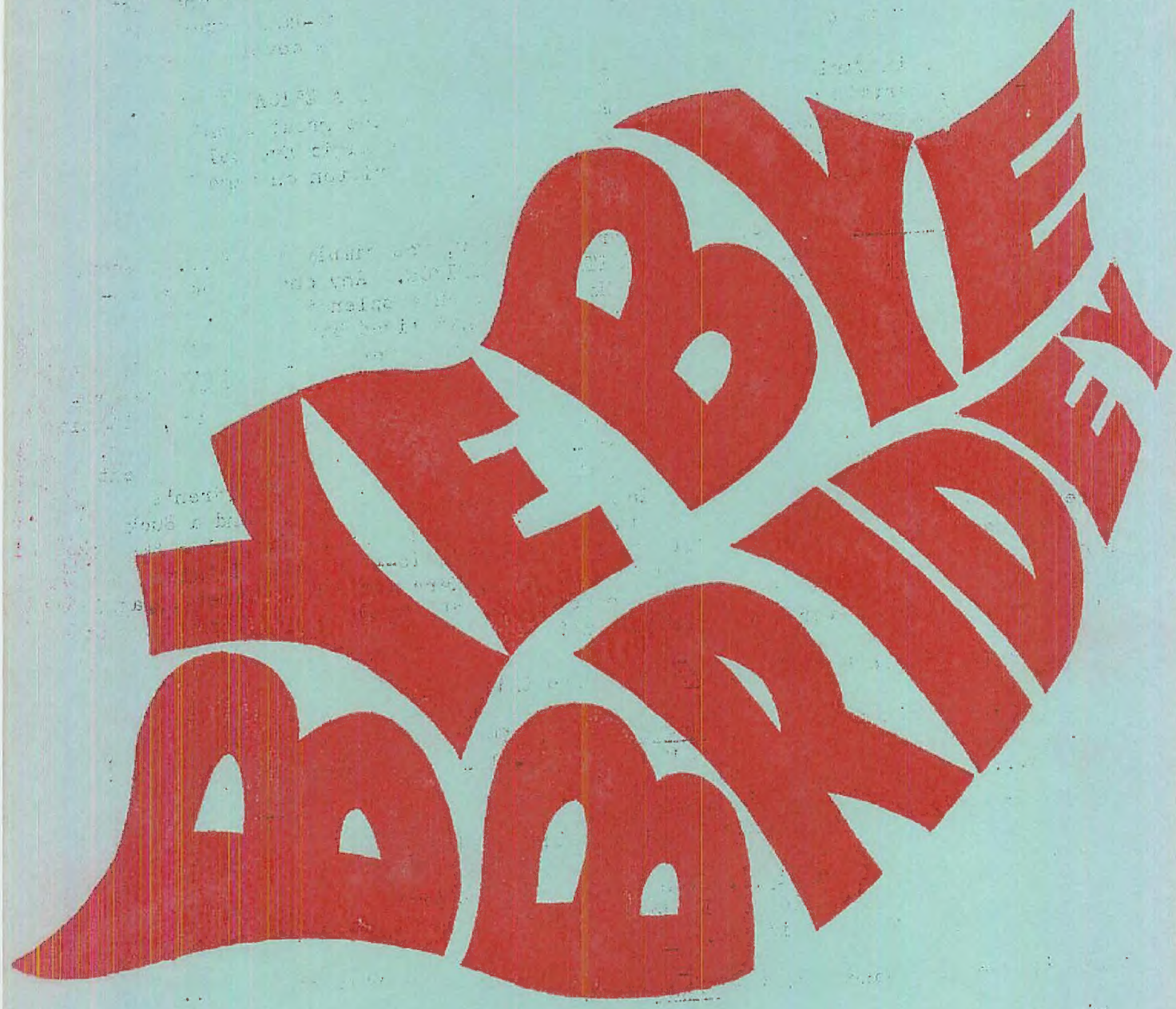
The Collins article was a pip...often wondered of the problems and woes of trying to compile an anthology. It seemed almost a thankless job. And I will keep an eye out for this one.

/It's due again in a couple of weeks...if it hasn't been postponed for the third time. -PL/

Buck's fanreviews...re FILMINDEX...better to my likes if they had not listed the producers; I'd want the writer, director, and main leads. Wouldn't you? /Yep./

So I read the WHIZ GANG thing and I enjoyed it...are you infecting me? /Yep./ Some subtle drug I'm inhaling from the ink of this zine? /See pages 17 - 33./

/Is that the end of it all? All? Really? Well, not quite. No more articles, no more reviews, but there will be that Index and one more EI. Write. -PL/


BYE BYE
BRIDE

Xero 10